

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Jesuit Educational
Center for Human Development**

A Quest for God



Women Religious as Sojourners



Vocational Decision in Emerging Adulthood



Spirituality, Liturgy, and Biology



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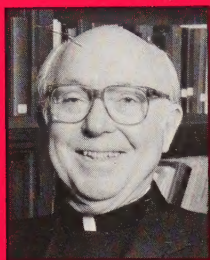


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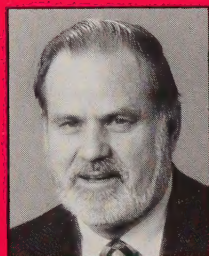
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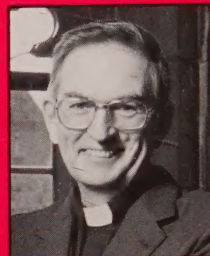
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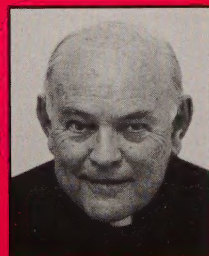
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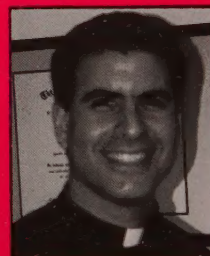
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Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

Book reviews, which should not exceed 600 words in length, should be sent to the Book Review Editor, Jon O'Brien, S.J., D.O., c/o HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (see addresses below).

Unaccepted mailed manuscripts will not be returned unless requested and submitted with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

BETHLEHEM'S MESSAGE THIS YEAR

In view of the present condition of our world, our editorial board has decided that reprinting this editorial is most appropriate this year.

I found it hard to accept. Downtown stores were already selling Christmas cards, lights, and ornaments. Their window displays announced the arrival of the gift-giving season. Playing quietly in the background, "Adeste Fideles" reinforced the message. The pressure to shop early and avoid the rush was already being applied. But it was still early in the month of October!

It is no secret that most stores in the United States squeeze more dollars into their cash registers in the pre-Christmas shopping season than they collect during all the remaining months of the year. So it is hardly surprising to find that store owners try to exploit the season for all it is worth. The longer they can keep the public in a gift-buying mood, the better it is for these vendors. But for those of us who celebrate the church's period of Advent as a sacred four-week season meant to prepare our souls for the special graces that Christmas brings, it can be downright irritating to see a full quarter of the year spent creating the atmosphere of "Silent Night" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" for the sake of commercial profit.

As October passed and autumn leaves turned gold and crimson before falling to the ground, ads televised during the World Series broadcast and other network programs gave the impression that Santa Claus might be arriving even before Thanksgiving Day this year. But instead of joyful anticipation, for most of us the month was filled with anxiety about what the weeks ahead might bring.

October's days and nights in Kosovo were charged with terror and the possibility that a Balkan war would erupt at any time. Israeli and

Palestinian tensions mounted as the date to carry out the Oslo agreement drew near, and violence still rocked the Holy Land. Two homophobic youths pistol-whipped a gay college student and left him to die outdoors on a freezing night in Wyoming. An ecoterrorist group set fire to a Rocky Mountain ski resort in Colorado, while the president of our country faced the prospect of impeachment because of his scandalous, nation-embarrassing behavior. The danger of recession and a worldwide economic slump became increasingly apparent. Researchers warned that at least a quarter of the adult population in African countries such as Zimbabwe and Botswana will die of AIDS during the decade just ahead. Iraq continued to create weapons of mass destruction, and lethal hurricanes caused a chaotic deluge in the Caribbean and Central America. All this while cash registers throughout the United States were beginning to herald prematurely the birth of our Savior.

I was in line at the checkout counter of a Hallmark store just a few days into October, when the customer ahead of me told me that she was glad to begin shopping for Christmas cards and presents so early because "it takes my mind off all the awful things that are happening in the world." She reminded me of people who read detective stories or gothic novels to escape the difficult conditions or stressful situations that plague their lives. Her remark taught me that while the merchants were hurrying the start of the holy season for their own economic reasons, Christmas, for shoppers like herself, was a welcome distraction that couldn't begin too soon.

It seems to me that we make a serious mistake if we try to convert Christmas into a brief but beautiful respite from the burdens our hearts carry all through the year. I think that especially during this season we ought to remember that it was into this world full of struggle, grief, fear, hostility, and sin that our Savior came and "dwelt among us" to teach us how, with courage, to conduct our lives. Peace,

hope, and joy are not achieved by turning away from the world that engulfs and affects us. They are gained by learning, from the family who lived in the stable at Bethlehem, the way to find meaning and happiness in even the most discomforting and difficult of times.

I wish I were an artist and could send out Christmas cards of my own design this year. I would draw, centrally, the Holy Family. Around them would be shepherds, magi, and angels, of course. But instead of a picturesque hillside and flock of sheep in the background, I'd draw burned-out shells of homes in Kosovo, a cemetery for thousands of hurricane victims in Honduras and Nicaragua, and a multitude of poor people sleeping on the inhospitable sidewalks of Calcutta and New York City. Flying past the star above the Child in the manger, I'd sketch bombers and cruise missiles hungry for targets to destroy.

You get the idea. God took on flesh and blood and a family and friends in this very world we live in—

not a thoroughly lovely place, but one he still chooses to live in today. He shares his divine mission with us: we are to serve as instruments he can use to transform the world—to bring it love and peace and joy. An enormous task for sure. But it is an all-powerful Child who has been born into this world and into our hearts to guide and strengthen us. The Christmas season reminds us of our purpose in life and gives us the graces we need to help our Savior save the struggling world and the people we love.

May the angels' song at Bethlehem keep hope and joy in our souls, not just on Christmas—or from October on—but through all the ups and downs of the new, unpredictable, millennium-completing year to come.

James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.

James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.
Editor-in-Chief

All the editors, members of the editorial board, and staff of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, along with the administrators, advisory board, faculty, and staff of the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality, send our heartfelt Christmas greetings to all our readers, writers, students, and benefactors.

We thank every one of you for the excitement, joy, and warmth you contribute to our lives.

May God's best blessings enrich your Christmas season, the new year, and every month beyond.

A Quest for God

Helen Maher Garvey, B.V.M., Ed.D.

The heckling grew louder. It was the fall of 1988, in the gymnasium of Lead High School in South Dakota. Here the visiting Native American girls team would oppose the home team. Lead High fans were making fake Indian war cries—a “woo-woo-woo” sound. Some were waving food stamps, a reference to the reservation’s receiving federal aid. Minutes before the game, the Pine Ridge Lady Thorpes Basketball Team hovered in the hallway leading to the basketball court. They could hear the cry, “Where’s the cheese?” The joke was that if Native Americans were lining up, it must be to get commodity cheese.

Amid deafening boos, the Native American team took the floor, led by SuAnne Big Crow, a 14-year-old freshman. She stopped in the center of the court, facing the Lead fans. Using her warmup jacket as a shawl, SuAnne began the Lakota shawl dance. As she danced, she sang in Lakota. The crowd went completely silent. In the quiet, the only sounds were the pure tones of the Lakota song. After a time of silence, the crowd began to cheer and applaud. Then SuAnne dropped her jacket, dribbled around the court, sprinted to the basket, and laid the ball through the hoop. The fans cheered her wildly.

How does this act of courage and grace (described by Ian Frazier in *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1999) relate to contemporary religious who strive to live

community in a time of world-shaking changes in the daily lives of families, religious congregations, and nations? SuAnne Big Crow’s act of courage and grace demonstrates fundamental elements of the journey to community: fear, identity, and conversion.

FEAR

Just as SuAnne experienced fear while waiting to sprint into the gymnasium, so too do we experience fear. There is a sense of loss among religious—loss of institutions, loss of esprit de corps, loss of certainties. Those in active ministry live singly or in small groups. A unity of work and life no longer exists. We have become more professional. What is next? Will I be left behind? Does anyone really care about me? Remember the good old days, when, amid laughter, we gathered in the community room and reviewed the May Crowning or the graduation? Remember the bad old days, when the attitude of one person in a house—the superior—could determine the environment of the house? Some veterans of the pre-Vatican II days contend that a difficult superior produced a certain unity in the house—a cohesive feeling against the czar. Others contend that although we have lost local superiors, they have come back in new and more terrifying forms.

**Although community life
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that our concern for one
another is immutable**

Sometimes our fear erupts in anger—often misplaced anger. Theologian Walter Brueggemann tells us that anger divides and pain unites. Pain is a more primary emotion than anger. If we can probe our anger or that of our companions, we shall discover pain. In facing and sharing pain, we shall be healed. “The public processing pain,” advises Brueggemann, “is the beginning of an alternative future.”

Recently, I asked a congregational leader how she was. “Well,” she answered, “the lynching is over.” She explained that she had suggested to the retired community that a lay administrator be appointed for the provincial house. This idea was met with anger and hostility. After many unhappy conversations, the council engaged a consultant. The consultant interviewed everyone and finally recommended that a lay administrator be appointed. His words were greeted receptively.

What caused this change in attitude? First of all, the retired sisters are good women. They do not want to cause division. In addition, a neutral person listened to the retired sisters, some of whom felt that the appointment of a lay administrator signaled abandonment. The consultant assured them of the leadership’s care for them. Finally, the provincial had the good sense to provide a place for all to be heard. She could not change the reality: active sisters were not available for internal service. She could, and did, find a way to probe the anger and find the pain and fear.

All of us, not just the retired, experience fear. So many certainties are gone. There are fears of personal diminishment, fears of family disintegration,

fears about employment. Community life says, We are here for you in your fears. We are here for you in joy and sorrow, and in all the ordinary times in between. Although community life cannot tell us that the world, the church, and the congregation will not change, it does assure us that our concern for one another is immutable. We may be living singly or in a house of twenty. We may be in Dubuque or Central America, but we are in this together. We may not have a peak experience with each sister. Some people will always unsettle us, but that is the promise of community—human beings with obvious flaws committed to each other in the essentials, sharing life. We are challenged to choose community in new ways every day. In her book *Finding the Treasure*, Sandra Schneiders tells us that community is the horizon of all our decision making. It may not be in the same room or the same house, but it is the same heritage and charism:

Community remains the personal and corporate horizon of her life, no matter how this is actualized in participation in the congregation’s life. Undoubtedly contemporary communities have evolved in very important ways in their capacity to include and validate the multiple relationships of their members, and to embrace a variety of lifestyles and living situations among their members, but the primacy of the community as the ultimately determining relational context of the life of the members remains.

In simple words, community is primary. Community will never again be primary in the same ways it was in 1960. We will never again march to church in the order of our profession; we will not sit at the table in a rigid hierarchy; we will not receive a surprise letter of appointment sending us to Missouri on August 15. But community is still primary. The decisions of this group of vowed religious—decisions about ministry, protests, patrimony, housing—are made in the light of the spirit of a founding charism, a developing charism, a constitution. These choices reflect the mutuality of adult women praying, listening, thinking, debating, and deciding. During this process, the community commands the privileged place, the locus of God’s will.

Will this spirit of community cast out fear completely? No; only perfect love casts out fear completely. But the spirit of community will shelter us, nurture us, hearten us with courage and valor. How often have you, since Vatican II, sprinted into the gymnasium of criticism and misunderstanding? How often have you faced hostile questions and sarcastic remarks about renewal? How often have you embarked on a difficult ministry, supported by the heritage of a community of sisters who heard the cry of

the poor in the lives of the people—a cry for reconciliation, for nonviolence, for healing, for a manifestation of God's love?

Will we ever fail in our commitment to community? Of course we will. Will fear ever paralyze us? Of course it will. The question is, What will we do with our failures and our paralyses? I remember standing behind two of our sisters during a wake at our motherhouse. The wake was in our infirmary, and the sisters standing before the coffin were residents of the infirmary. One asked, "Is she dead?" The other replied, "I don't know. They never tell us anything around here." Humor, forgiveness, warmth, and prayer will give us perspective, will reunite us to our deepest desire for community. It is God who perfects community.

IDENTITY

Listen to the great Catholic novelist, Alice McDermott, the author of *Charming Billy*, describe identity (in *Commonweal*, February 11, 2000):

Twenty years ago no one could have convinced me that I would send my children to Catholic schools, but, of course, now, that's where they are. Because I want them to have the ballast of faith, because I want them to understand the importance of the life of the Spirit, because I want their moral education to have a context that exceeds human logic and understanding and gives the whole of life that shapeliness that I once thought could only be achieved momentarily by art. Because I know there will be times in their lives when they will need the church.

Like a teen-ager at some extended family gathering—like any of us, let's face it, at some extended family gathering—I have come to realize that it is not always easy to be a part of the family of the Catholic Church. It is not always easy to have a sense of humor and a sense of irony and still be a part of this church. It is not always easy to escape the constrictions and the narrow-mindedness that the church has been responsible for. It is not always easy to feel hip and intelligent and modern while being part of this church. . . . It is not always easy to love the church, but then again, in my experience, it is not always easy to love anyone.

Does Alice McDermott depict a perfect community? No. Does she describe a community with a clear identity? Yes. She shows us the church with all the familiarity of family—lovable, obstinate, unjust, faithful, essential kinship. This kind of identity is basic to the survival, growth, and maturation of community. It is not enough to say that community is different now, so anything goes. The fundamental meaning of community is rooted in the Trinity—the intimate re-

lationship of three persons reaching out to all of creation. Our God is a God of relationships. We are made in the image and likeness of a God who lives not in isolation but in community. If we are to fulfill our purpose as human beings, community is essential. "An isolated person," Catherine LaCugna instructs us, "is a contradiction in terms."

So our fundamental identity as community is as traditional as the *Baltimore Catechism*. We all remember the question, "What is man?" and the answer, "Man is a creature composed of body and soul and made in the image and likeness of God." When SuAnne Big Crow danced the Lakota dance and sang the Lakota song, she did not act in isolation. When and how did she learn this ritual? What discipline and kinship prepared this 14-year-old girl to evidence such grace and courage? It did not come from McDonald's or video games. It came from the heart of a holy culture. It came from the freedoms and restrictions of a community.

Sociologists tell us that a healthy organization requires boundaries. It must be clear what membership means, what defines personal and communal expectations. What are the common bonds that unite your community? No outsider can define those realities, but your constitutions and your ongoing dialogue continually name your boundaries. With the same emphasis, Nancy Schreck, O.S.F., cautions us, in an article titled "The Heart of the Matter: Symbolic Meaning-Making Dimensions of Leadership" (*LCWR Occasional Papers*, Fall 1998), that "our ability to challenge members to the deep stories of our life together can be dulled by an acceptance of most anything members want to do 'within reason,' whether or not it has anything to do with the charism."

Charism and boundaries intersect in discussions about the congregation's relationship with associates. Associates have brought great gifts to religious congregations. Their presence has been with us from the beginning in our connections with laypersons who have supported us through the ages. Think of the laypersons who drove us to wakes and funerals, the ones who came on Saturdays to fix the washing machine or lay a carpet or varnish desks. Remember what we have learned from them and how we have collaborated with them. Religious and laypeople have nourished one another in ministry since Vatican II. Our histories are histories of connection and, later, histories of partnership.

What is critical in the formal associate programs is a clear understanding of expectations. The vocation of the layperson is one of grace, emerging from baptism and from the choice of the married or single state of life. The vocation of the religious is also one of grace, emerging from baptism and from the choice

Sometimes we feel good about ourselves at the expense of someone who becomes the scapegoat for our frustrations

of the religious state of life. Both of these vocations are essential calls from God. Neither is superior to the other. But they are different, and policies describing the relationship between vowed members and associates should clarify this difference. Sociologist Patricia Wittberg summarizes the issue clearly in "Outward Orientation in Declining Organizations" (in Nadine Foley, ed., *Claiming Our Truth*): "Earlier studies of other religious organizations have emphasized that the establishment of clearly defined boundaries between members and nonmembers is necessary for the group's survival."

Mutuality and collaboration are enhanced by diversity, not by homogeneity. Our desire for inclusion sometimes leads us to blur distinctions and raise false expectations, creating eventual disappointment. Our communities must reach beyond themselves, just as God reaches to all of creation. We extend community beyond our parochial horizons to the laity, to interfaith groups, to the earth, but we do so with a strong sense of our own identity—our history, culture, and vocation. Distinguished writers teach us that all living bodies, including religious congregations, are organisms. The maturation of an organism involves both differentiation (distinct qualities) and integration (unification). Each organism lives in creative tension between these two principles. Both our identity and our inclusion sustain us, renew us, and strengthen us, so that we continue the good work begun in us—a good work filled not only with heritage but also with promise.

CONVERSION

The call to community is a summons to conversion. After their cruel behavior, the fans in the gymnasium

in Lead, South Dakota, were silent and shamed before the presence of God in the person of SuAnne. How often we are silent and shamed before the presence of God in the person of the poor, the disenfranchised, or even the scorched earth. How often we realize the shallowness of our lives in the face of the absolute goodness of other persons—migrants, genuine contemplatives in a faith-sharing group, the prostitute or mentally ill person who attends your car when it breaks down in an embattled neighborhood. The fans cheered SuAnne Big Crow. They experienced conversion. Before we condemn the folks in Lead, let us examine our own cruel behavior. Most of the people in Lead were struggling to eke out a marginal life through oppressive toil in the mines. They too had suffered. They too wanted to feel good about themselves.

Sometimes we feel good about ourselves at the expense of someone else—congregational leadership, the Republican Party, the pastor, the diocesan office, a prophetic leader in the membership—someone who becomes the scapegoat for our frustrations. This person or group loses a human face. They become the object of our failure to pray, to be open, to read, to listen, to watch the news with critical analysis, to develop a world wider than our petty antagonisms. If we open ourselves to grace, one day we will change; one day we will be silent before the truth of this person or group; one day we will cheer them. One day we will experience community anew.

Experiencing community anew is an ongoing affair. It challenges us to think deeply about the all-embracing opportunity to act in the image and likeness of God. We cannot fix community by avoiding reality, by quickly constructing punitive policies, by dividing the world into winners and losers. We are challenged to see the real community. The real community is not the conscious organization with its written documents, its visible goals, policies, and manuals. Those artifacts are the tip of the iceberg. The real community is the unconscious organization, invisible, lying just below the surface—the culture, the humor, the values, the patterns of social behavior that determine the future of the organization.

Insofar as the conscious organization is consistent with the life of the unconscious organization, its actions will promote the life of the organization. How often have we labored over documents that received approbation on a policy level but never entered into the heart of the congregation? Those documents will be undercut, ignored, and virtually destroyed by the unconscious organization. Conversely, the major decisions made by the conscious organization, which are consonant with the life of the unconscious organization, will nurture and enhance the very being of

the congregation. This integrity, this alignment, creates change in external practice. When communities or individuals stand on the cusp of change, they feel a strong pull to slip back into familiar, repetitive behaviors. In *A Different Touch*, Judith A. Merkle, S.N.D.deN., notes that when this tendency is overcome, it is remarkable, and we name it a movement of the Spirit. We recognize conversion.

Religious congregations respond to the call to conversion by our public declaration of vows, our ongoing formation, and our sometimes exhausting dialogue on congregational, church, and world issues. Here we call one another to conversion. Here we probe the unconscious organization. Here we renew our understanding of ourselves as images of God. All persons are born into community. Religious deliberately choose a very specific kind of community, rooted in the quest for God. Through our assemblies, clusters, and friendships, through our fidelity to the charisms of our congregations, we come home again to community on a regular basis. As we return often to the source of relationships, the image and likeness of God—as we share our stories—we might reflect on “Natural History,” a simple poem by E. B. White:

The spider, dropping down from twig,
Unwinds a thread of his devising:
A thin, premeditated rig
To use in rising.

And all the journey down through space,
In cool descent, and loyal-hearted,
He builds a ladder to the place
From which he started.

Thus, I go forth as spiders do,
In spider's web a truth discerning,
Attach one silken strand to you
For my returning.

And so we always build a ladder to the place where we started. The place where we started is the image and likeness of God. The place where we started is Baptism, our family, our parish, the charism of our congregations. The place where we started is the quest for God. Or, rather than building a ladder, we receive a ladder from where we started. It was in the image and likeness of God and in the image and likeness of the Sioux heritage that SuAnne Big Crow danced and sang. It is in the image and likeness of God and in the image and likeness of our charisms that religious dance and sing the rhythm and the sounds of community. We dance our heritage. We sing our vision. We wear the shawl of our charism. We are religious. We are community.

By the way, the Lady Thorpes won the basketball game.

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Diocesan Priesthood's Spirituality

George Aschenbrenner, S.J.

The scandal of the particularity of God's love! Lofty, challenging words—yet not beyond our experience, if we reflect a bit. At some time or other, for all of us, in a quite specific situation, an awareness of God's love pierces our heart with a particularity and a uniqueness that take our breath away. While walking with low, discouraged spirit, I am stopped in my tracks by a cardinal of regal red and pointed crest, whose recital of a melodious trill seems just for me. This distraction stops me in amazement, and my spirits begin to shift. That I should be so beautifully greeted in a time of need is wonderful enough. That a loving God is somehow involved invites a further incarnation of my faith. But that this consoling creature be intended with a particularity for me here, now—that seems scandalous, just too incredible to be true. It is a moment of invitation to a specially incarnational faith, and my whole life's personal, intimate relationship with God in the risen Jesus hangs in the balance. "Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid: you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows" (Luke 12:7). This astonishing particularity of God's love takes expression in a distinctive, unique spirituality for each one of us and for each vocation in the church. But the distinctive uniqueness of God's love and care for us, sad to say, is easily blunted in casual complacency. And our daily experience is always dulled by such impersonal unbelief.

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Though it is stated dramatically, even scandalously so, the opening section of this article is the foundation of Catholic Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality always focuses on the revelation of God in the promised presence of the Risen Jesus with every human being. This presence is enfleshed in a unique personal relationship that grows and develops over a whole life span. This relationship always presumes the faithful initiative of God. It is an initiative of love at the heart of God, revealed and promised in the coming of Jesus. Without this initiative of God, no human striving can produce spirituality. Yet given that essential foundation, Christian spirituality always requires the free response of human beings in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Catholic Christian spirituality is always trinitarian and incarnational.

What is seen in Jesus somehow takes flesh in our human heart. How important it is to recognize and watch in admiration the fire of love growing in Jesus, especially during those early, long, hidden years. A fullness of the Holy Spirit, always present in him and native to his divine identity, is like a spark quietly burning to a flame and kindling the energies of his humanity into a special vocation. This fire is contagious in Christian spirituality. Anyone who takes a long, loving look at Jesus finds an inner depth, a richness, a fire. To reduce Jesus to a one-dimensional

figure is to put a damper on the Holy Spirit, to find someone too plain and Spirit-less. Whereas anyone seriously contemplating Jesus catches the fire and is drawn into the adventure of Christian spirituality. Without this fire, the enterprise is lifeless, passionless, even if intellectually correct. This is not to denigrate the important intellectual element in the balance and mix of Christian spirituality. It is simply to keep the whole torch of our hearts in the full flame of the Holy Spirit, glowing in everything about Jesus.

Much more than the basic philosophy or rationale of any individual's life, Christian spirituality is always radically religious and always communitarian. As a trinitarian experience, the human response is drawn to the God of Jesus in the attractiveness of his own love relationship with the One he called "my dearly beloved Father." This attractiveness of the loving interaction of Jesus and his Beloved is the pull of the Holy Spirit on each of us, luring us into the community of love that is the Trinity. Tightfistedly to cling to control of our lives is to resist this magnetic attraction of the Holy Spirit. Such resistance often testifies to blinders fearfully shielding the eyes of our hearts from radiance of Jesus' own response to the fire of his Beloved's love—a response expressed in daring trust: letting his life fall out of control and into the embrace of all that Love. This love of the Trinity is so real—and so generously available too—as to become a life we live in faith, if we are capable of a necessary purification. Our response to this trinitarian invitation reveals the divine hope for community among us all. An individualistic response misses the point, does not really hear the full invitation, and is not authentic Christian spirituality.

Finally, the human response is wholehearted and many-faceted. God's loving invitation registers across the whole spectrum of our being: mind, body, spirit. Either an overly rationalistic or an overly emotional response is too narrowly incomplete and, therefore, corrosive of genuine Christian spirituality. We must learn to recognize and integrate grace, stirring in all the dimensions of our human makeup. To escape into one favorite dimension, to live a comfortable, controlled spirituality, is a temptation for us all. But this always forfeits a wholeheartedness, keeps the fire slaked, and betrays a genuine Christian spirituality.

In an attempt to integrate the various elements presented in the previous paragraphs, I propose the following as a description of Christian spirituality at work throughout this article: our belief in (response to) God's Love in Jesus, experienced across the whole spectrum of our human lives, so that we may live and serve more and more united with one another, and with God, in the Holy Spirit.

DISTINCTIVE DIOCESAN PRIESTLY SPIRITUALITY

Diocesan priestly spirituality is a distinctive and unique version of Christian spirituality. It is important in the church today to appreciate and to be able to describe in some way the distinctive Christian spirituality that sets off the diocesan priesthood, in its beauty and challenge, as different from all other spiritualities and vocations in the church. Describing such a distinctive spirituality can provide a stabilizing foundation for dealing with some of the challenges facing the priesthood today.

However, the existence of a distinctive spirituality for diocesan priesthood is exactly what many people deny. Even some priests—whose hearts, I surmise, are longing, deep down, for such a spiritual identity—share this denial. This is no false humility. No, the issue is more serious than that. It is a deep misunderstanding that has been prevalent in the church for some time. Benedictines, Franciscans, Jesuits, and other religious congregations do indeed have their own unique spiritualities, somehow flowing from the original vision of their founders and foundresses. But such is not the case for the diocesan priesthood. Nothing uniquely special distinguishes that priesthood; so goes the common misconception. I have often heard this claim from diocesan priests and from other people. It is one of the most serious problems facing diocesan priesthood at this time.

In all charity, I beg to differ on a point that is too serious to brook any false humility, misguided kindness, or outright misunderstanding. I surely do not blame any priests for this mistake. It has taken me years of experience with diocesan priesthood, and lots of prayerful reflection, to appreciate the central point of this article: that there exists a spirituality uniquely distinctive of diocesan priesthood. The lack of appreciation for such a distinctive spirituality always weighs heavy on the priests themselves and on the church as a whole.

When priests do not have a sense of a distinctive spirituality that articulates the unique beauty and value of their priesthood, a continuing morale problem among them, painful as it is, is no surprise. (Though "Reflections on the Morale of Priests," published by the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, addressed the morale issue in March 1988, few would agree that the issue has been resolved.) If one does not believe in and appreciate a spirituality specified uniquely not only for the individual priest but also for diocesan priesthood as a vocation in itself, a basic self-respect is hard to come by. As a result, the glow and fire of a distinctive value of diocesan priesthood cannot enflame any program of

seminary formation. But even more seriously, the basic respect within the church as a whole for diocesan priesthood is hardly possible. In an article titled "Toward a Spirituality of the Diocesan Priesthood" (*Seminary Journal*, Fall 1999), Monsignor Cornelius M. McRae, a former spiritual director at the North American College in Rome, mentions a joke he made during a talk he gave to formation personnel: "There was a wonderful priest with whom I worked on a spiritual direction team. He had a sign on his desk that read, 'My job is so secret that not even I know what I am doing.'" We can all laugh at the sign, but we also realize that behind the joke is a very serious issue, which McRae addressed in his talk.

CALLING DOWN FIRE

In recent years we have been bashful about describing the unique power of the ministerial priesthood. In the clashing crosscurrents of an overly clerical, elitist tendency and a rediscovery of the universal priesthood, this is understandable. But our image of ordained priesthood is so common and colorless as to lack any excitement or inspiration. Father Robert Barron is a theologian at Mundelein Seminary who teaches and directs seminarians and has been trying to change that image. In an interview about diocesan priesthood, "How to Build a Better Priest" (*US Catholics*, December 1997), he refers to the Jesuit paleontologist and spiritual writer Teilhard de Chardin, who, in his *Mass on the World*, prays: "empowered by that priesthood which you alone (as I firmly believe) have bestowed on me—upon all that in the world of human flesh is now about to be born or to die beneath the rising sun, I will call down the Fire." This divine fire for the transformation of the world is at the core of the two images that Barron uses for the priest. He speaks of the priest "as one who guides others into the mystery of God and . . . as soul doctor." The fire does not belong to the priest; it is not of his own creation. It is the fire of God's love in the Holy Spirit and is meant to become more and more the life we all lead as baptized disciples of Jesus.

But through ordination, the priest has a unique power to administer that fire, to call it down from heaven, to summon it forth in our midst. In this way, the priest is able to doctor that deepest part of the person we call the soul. This fire of the Holy Spirit is the transforming and healing power of Christ in our world. In our contemporary postmodern world, where a flu has chilled and soured the souls of many and quarantined their effectiveness as selflessly loving ministers, a doctoring of soul, an administering of divine fire, is a much-needed art.

Though the priest will make use of a variety of gifts in his ministry, somehow his very presence must radiate a reality that constantly underlies everything he does: that mystery of incarnational fire. Such a soul doctor ministers always out of the belief that our deepest hope, joy, promise, and fulfillment are in this fire of Spirit. The priest stands as a unique minister of that fire. Calling down the fire so as to lead people into the mystery of God and to doctor the deepest desires of soul is not limited to the Mass on the World but is a power and vision suffusing the priest's whole life and ministry. This exciting and attractive vision of priesthood sounds a call for serious priestly formation and training. To center one's whole being in the fire and to learn to enkindle it in the midst of busy pastoral settings is never easy or automatic. Nor is everyone called to this distinctive ministry. In a book soon to be published by Loyola Press of Chicago, I develop more fully these images and this vision of diocesan priesthood.

Our God, whose particular love for each and every one of us is scandalously unique, invites us all to a spirituality of response that is likewise distinctive and unique. Such a spirituality characterizes each of the various vocations in the church. We continue to work at appreciating, developing, and articulating such a spirituality for each vocation. "Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine" (Is. 43:1). These words, amazingly, are addressed to each and every one of us. When applied to a diocesan priest, they not only speak of his own individual call; they are also true of the diocesan priesthood itself as a unique vocation in the church, enflamed by a distinctive spirituality.

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Emerging Adulthood and Vocational Decision

Mary Elizabeth Kenel, Ph.D.

Emerging adulthood is proposed as a new conception of psychosocial development encompassing the late teen years through the twenties, with a particular focus on the 18- to 25-year age range. This was the stage of life during which many people once made vocational commitments to religious life, as well as to careers, marriage, and parenthood. An examination of the stage of emerging adulthood offers some insight into the current dearth of vocations to religious life.

Jeffery Jensen Arnett, Ph.D., of the University of Maryland, presented his research on emerging adulthood in the May 2000 issue of *American Psychologist*. His article provided evidence that emerging adulthood is a distinct period demographically, subjectively, and in terms of identity exploration. He also outlined a cultural context that fosters the development of the stage of emerging adulthood.

Over the past fifty years, demographic shifts in industrialized societies have altered the nature of the late teens and early twenties. Once a relatively brief period during which one transitioned into adult roles, entering the work world and marriage, these years now constitute a distinct period in the life course, characterized by change and exploration of possible life directions. "Finding oneself" seems to be one of the tasks of this period.

The extent to which a person is able or willing to participate in the stage of emerging adulthood, however, is highly conditioned by cultural structures and constraints. As Arnett points out, at least at present, emerging adulthood seems to be a phenomenon in Western culture, and especially in the United States, which has enjoyed a long period of relative peace and prosperity. It is not a universal period in the life course, for it exists only in those cultures that require a high level of education and training for entry into the information-based professions that are most prestigious and most financially rewarding. In such settings, marriage, parenthood, and other commitments are likely to be postponed until well after schooling is completed. During the period between the end of one's schooling and the making of adult commitments, allowance is made for exploration of various relationships prior to marriage and for job exploration and career consolidation prior to taking on financial responsibility for raising a child. And even for those considering a religious or priestly vocation, this period of exploration tends to be seen as desirable in order to gain a measure of life experience.

While the median age for marriage might be high in a particular country, membership in a minority culture within that country might significantly alter the age at which one marries. Other limitations in

educational and occupational opportunities also influence the extent to which a person can spend the years between 18 and 25 exploring various roles and occupations. Social class has a tremendous influence upon one's ability to devote a considerable period of time to exploration. Many persons of working-class or lower-class status are unlikely to have the financial ability to remain in school or to postpone entering the work force. Arnett notes, however, that as developing countries become more integrated into the global economy, there will be an increased demand for educated workers and less need for young people's labor. Increased life expectancy would also make a period of exploration more feasible and attractive. He contends that by the end of the 21st century, emerging adulthood will be normative worldwide, although it is likely to vary widely in length and content both within and between countries.

TIME OF EXPLORATION

Building upon the theoretical contributions of developmental theorists such as Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson, and Kenneth Keniston, Arnett makes the case for a distinct phase of the life course characterized by relative independence from social roles and normative expectations. Although emerging adults are leaving behind the dependency of childhood and adolescence, they have not yet taken on the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood. Rather than "settle down," emerging adults choose to explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews. Emerging adulthood, then, is a period when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of their lives. Keeping one's options open and avoiding premature commitments are significant features of this period.

One important characteristic of emerging adulthood might be summed up by stating that nothing is normative demographically. The diversity and unpredictability of emerging adulthood is a reflection of the experimental and exploratory quality of the period. Arnett notes that persons within this age bracket tend to have a wider scope of possible activities than persons in other age periods because they are less likely to be constrained by role requirements. He cites, for example, the diversity of residential status within this age group: individuals may live at home, enjoy relative independence at college, and spend several years in some semiautonomous combination of independent living and continued reliance on adults. Amid this diversity, the unifying feature is

one of instability, for emerging adults have the highest rates of residential change of any age group. The frequent residential changes made during emerging adulthood reflect its exploratory quality because they often occur at the end of one period of exploration or at the beginning of another. It is only in the late twenties, during the transition to young adulthood, that the diversity narrows and the instability eases. At this point, young people are inclined to make more enduring choices in work as well as in love, or in a commitment to priestly or religious life.

Arnett emphasizes the subjective distinctiveness of emerging adulthood. Feeling themselves to be neither adolescents nor adults, those in the stage of emerging adulthood tend to see themselves as works in progress. Reaching adulthood seems not to be defined, however, simply by reaching a certain age or by finishing one's education or settling into a career. Even marriage and parenthood, significant transitions that they are, do not necessarily qualify one as having reached adulthood. Instead, Arnett's research points to the importance of certain qualities of character, particularly accepting responsibility for oneself and making independent decisions, as the hallmarks of adulthood. The prominence of these criteria, in conjunction with achieving financial independence, reflects an emphasis in emerging adulthood on becoming a self-sufficient person. It would appear that only when these character qualities have matured to some extent and financial independence has been attained do emerging adults experience a subjective change in their developmental status.

LOVE, WORK, WORLDVIEW

Another key feature of emerging adulthood identified by Arnett is that it is the period of life that offers the most opportunity for identity exploration in the areas of love, work, and worldview. Although research on identity formation has focused mainly on the adolescent period, it has shown that identity achievement has rarely been reached by the end of high school. Identity formation continues throughout the late teens and the twenties—and, in fact, there is continued development of identity at each new phase of life. Within the period of emerging adulthood, however, identity formation involves trying out various life possibilities and gradually moving toward making commitments.

In emerging adulthood, explorations in love become more intimate and serious. Dating is more likely to focus on the couple and the exploration of the potential for emotional and physical intimacy. Relationships tend to last longer than in adolescence and are more likely to include sexual intercourse and

possibly cohabitation. The question implicit in relationship exploration is identity-focused: Given the kind of person I am, what kind of person do I wish to have as a life partner?

In emerging adulthood, work experiences become more focused on preparation for adult work roles. At this point, individuals begin to consider how their work experiences will lay the foundation for the jobs they wish to hold throughout adulthood. In exploring work issues, they explore identity issues as well: What kind of work am I good at? What kind of work would I find satisfying for the long term? What are my chances of getting a job in the field that seems to suit me best? Emerging adults' educational choices and experiences explore similar questions. In their educational paths, they try out various possibilities that would prepare them for different kinds of future work. Many college students change majors more than once as they try on potential occupational futures. Graduate school offers the opportunity for still another change of direction.

The goals of identity exploration in emerging adulthood are not limited to direct preparation for adult roles. Instead, the explorations of emerging adults are partly explorations for their own sake—part of obtaining a broad range of life experiences before taking on enduring and defining, hence limiting, adult responsibilities. It is the absence of enduring commitments in emerging adulthood that makes possible a degree of experimentation and exploration that is not likely to be available at later points in life. For people who wish to have a variety of romantic and sexual experiences, emerging adulthood is the time for it, because parental supervision is diminished and there is as yet little pressure to enter marriage. In a similar manner, emerging adulthood is the time to try out unusual work and educational possibilities. For this reason, short-term volunteer jobs in a variety of civic or faith-based organizations are very popular. Emerging adults may also travel to different parts of their country or abroad, often in the context of limited-term educational or work experiences. This also contributes to identity exploration—an expansion of one's range of personal experiences prior to making the more enduring choices of adulthood.

Building on the work of William Perry, Arnett indicates that changes in worldviews are often a central part of cognitive development during emerging adulthood. Questioning the values and beliefs of one's parents and establishing one's own worldview are essential criteria for attaining adult status in one's own eyes. This is true whether the emerging adult does or does not have the benefit of higher education. Exposure to new ideas and new people, at school or in the workplace, promotes the formulation of a set of

Emerging adulthood is a distinct period demographically, subjectively, and in terms of identity exploration

beliefs that is the product of the young person's independent thinking.

One additional factor characteristic of the stage of emerging adulthood noted by Arnett is that of high levels of risk behavior. It is during this period that substance abuse, unprotected sex, and risky driving peak. These behaviors may be understood as part of the emerging adult's identity exploration, for one of the motives consistently found to be related to risk behavior is sensation seeking. Participation in risk behavior can be pursued more freely at this stage than during adolescence because of lower levels of parental supervision. Participation in such behavior is also fostered because of the absence of role constraints and responsibilities such as those imposed by marriage and parenthood.

INFLUENCE ON VOCATIONS

Examining the various facets of emerging adulthood, we find a number of factors that influence religious vocations. Seen from the point of view of culture—save for the social upheavals related to the Vietnam War—the United States and most other industrialized Western nations have enjoyed a relatively long period of peace and prosperity. Tremendous social changes during the past fifty years have altered educational and career prospects for all, but especially for women. Family affluence, student loans, and relatively inexpensive community college programs now make a college education more affordable for everyone. Within a large segment of the population there exists an expectation, not necessar-

ily stated, that a person will attend college prior to embarking on any other type of commitment. College education has, in many areas, replaced high-school education as the norm for obtaining an entry-level position in the work world.

Seminaries and religious communities, having experienced some of the problems that stemmed from accepting applicants who had not had the opportunity to address identity issues sufficiently prior to making a commitment to a celibate lifestyle, have contributed to this expectation of college before commitment. Many religious communities, although not all, anticipate that applicants will have completed at least an undergraduate degree prior to making a formal application to the community. Often, persons who seek to apply prior to completing their degree are encouraged to finish their schooling first. In some instances, the potential candidate's interest is maintained during the waiting period through contacts with the vocation director or by participation in a vocation awareness group. Having conducted preadmission psychological evaluations for many seminaries and religious communities, I have met applicants who reported disillusionment when, having stated an interest in a particular group, they were asked to wait but received no further encouragement. For some, such a response constitutes sufficient "rejection" to discourage them from seeking entrance into a religious community for a considerable length of time after graduation. For others, the seeming lack of interest prompts them to seek admission elsewhere.

A number of organizations, religious and civic, are profiting from the desire of emerging adults to try out a variety of unusual work opportunities, generally in the form of some sort of volunteer service. The Peace Corps remains a favorite destination of many seeking overseas experiences, while AmeriCorps offers similar opportunities for service within the United States. A number of religious communities have recognized the potential benefits that emerging adults bring to and receive from their associate or volunteer organizations. Some organizations offer service opportunities in this country; others offer an international experience. Many provide some sort of community experience through which the emerging adult has the opportunity to test the waters of a religious vocation. In most of the groups with which I have had contact, whether or not the person has an interest in religious life, the community experience offers peer support in living gospel values, as well as an opportunity to develop a deeper prayer life. Thus, the emerging adult not only obtains valuable work experience and increased self-esteem through living purposefully but also has an opportunity to build a

worldview based on an ethic of social justice. In return, the organizations obtain well-educated volunteers, many of whom have already done volunteer work to some extent while in college, to continue their mission to the poor and underserved members of society. While most of these volunteers leave the organization after their period of service ends, some affiliate themselves with the group on a more permanent basis.

One of the key characteristics of emerging adults is their desire to keep their options open. The positive aspect of this characteristic is that it allows sufficient time to explore identity issues as they pertain to work and to relationships. Fifty and more years ago, and even today in certain minority cultures within our country, cultural pressures to "settle down" contributed to premature closure of identity. Marriage was entered into during the late teens or early twenties, often before the persons involved had sufficient self-knowledge and a realistic appreciation of their genuine needs, strengths, and weaknesses. Many adjustments during the earlier years of marriage were made more difficult due to immaturity on the part of the spouses. Career decisions, too, often reflected a premature closure of identity, as there was pressure to "get a job" and an expectation that one would continue to work in the chosen field for the remainder of one's working life. Change of career tended to be equated with instability.

Entrance into seminary or religious life also was subject to problems associated with premature closure of identity. The trend was to accept students immediately after high-school graduation, or even earlier, in the case of high-school seminary training. While many people later concluded that they had made the vocational choice that was most suitable for them, not all did. At least a portion of those leaving religious life during the past thirty-five years had made vocational choices for which they were not well suited. Recognition of the difficulties associated with premature identity definition has encouraged many seminaries and religious communities to accept a later age of entrance as normative.

One of the negative features associated with "keeping options open" appears to be a fear of commitment and subsequent failure to make a commitment. While Arnett suggests that the emerging adult enters into the stage of young adulthood somewhere between the ages of 25 and 30, a number of persons continue living the lifestyle of emerging adults well beyond that point. Having enjoyed a period of unprecedented freedom, some appear unwilling to deal realistically with the need to choose, to make enduring decisions—in a word, to "play for keeps." For some, the meaning of commitment itself seems to be called

into question and equated with mere conformity to societal demands or sterile obligation. Others express their ideals in terms of maximizing their human potential and personal growth—ideals that seem antithetical to fidelity to commitments involving people or causes other than themselves. The desire to maintain their ability to change direction more or less at will leads some people to attempt to remain free of the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood. As a psychotherapist, I have had to help clients confront the illusion that they could withhold choice in an effort to maintain “freedom” and help them recognize that it is by exercising their power to choose that they create meaningfulness and experience true freedom.

In the past, given the social and religious structures of the time, entrance into seminary or religious community was treated as the equivalent of having made a total, irrevocable commitment. Those leaving during the training or formation period were often treated with disdain and referred to as “failed vocations.” Now, vocation directors rightly indicate that entering seminary or religious community is entering into a period of intense discernment, to determine if indeed priesthood or religious life is one’s true vocation.

Dealing with issues of commitment then becomes the domain of the formation team until a determination is reached and ratified by ordination, final vows, or the candidate’s departure. It is necessary, however, to address issues of commitment throughout the entire process. My work has occasionally brought me into contact with applicants whose attitudes show little appreciation for the seriousness of even the initial steps toward vocational discernment. They approach the psychological evaluation process in a cavalier manner, arriving late for appointments, for example, or submitting incomplete or poorly written autobiographies. Comparing notes with vocation directors, I have found that very often the applicants have treated them in similar fashion. As they value “keeping their options open,” these applicants do not seem invested in presenting a positive image. Receiving a “yes” or “no” regarding their query appears to matter little to them, for they are convinced that if one door closes, another will open for them.

Another factor that affects vocations to religious life and priesthood is the relative affluence enjoyed by the families of many potential candidates. Often the family is able to offer a level of financial support that allows the young person to study or travel abroad for a considerable period of time. Supplementing their financial resources with income earned at a variety of short-term positions, many emerging adults live nomadic lifestyles, moving from job to job and place to

Vocation directors and formation personnel, whose own periods of emerging adulthood may have been shortened or curtailed by lack of resources or opportunities, must not judge applicants according to norms of the past

place as they wish. As Arnett notes, during this period of instability, many individuals engage in high levels of risk behavior or involve themselves in numerous sexual liaisons. When these persons enter the stage of young adulthood and seek entrance into religious life or seminary, they present a challenge for vocation directors and those performing psychological evaluations prior to entrance into a religious or priestly formation program.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES

In the past, a behavior profile typical of an emerging adult would likely have been viewed as reflecting an undesirable level of instability. The evaluation process is now a more complex one, as past behavior—particularly that between the ages of 18 and 25—is not necessarily the best predictor of future behavior. It is also necessary that vocation directors and formation personnel, whose own periods of emerging adulthood may have been shortened or curtailed by lack of financial resources and/or opportunities, not judge the applicant solely in light of the norms of the past. Feelings of jealousy, envy, or wishful thinking aroused by the availability of many

opportunities denied oneself may cloud a vocation director's perspective on a candidate's suitability for religious life or priesthood.

In addition, vocation directors and formation personnel need to be aware that not every person fulfills the description Arnett offers of the emerging adult. As he indicated, some are simply not able to afford the luxury of a prolonged period of exploration. Others, given the circumstances of their family or subculture, reach a vocational decision early. Arnett hints at yet another group of persons who, by virtue of personality, are inclined to limit their explorations or seek a relatively early resolution to them. Members of all these different groups present themselves as candidates for admission to seminary and religious life. Some will very likely be content with their vocational choice. Others, perhaps upon meeting candidates who have had far more life experience, may find their sense of adequacy and maturity challenged. They may struggle to achieve positive self-regard despite their perceived "deficit" of alternate experience. In working with candidates who present with this type of problem, it may be helpful to have them identify ways in which they have demonstrated competence, self-reliance, and independent thinking and action.

Confronted with their relative lack of life experience, some candidates may leave the formation program in order to explore themselves and their world prior to making a final commitment to any career or lifestyle. Still others may withdraw into a false sense of holiness based on their being "saved" from the temptations of the world and the flesh. They sometimes betray themselves by their judgmental attitudes and rigid moralistic stance toward those whose life paths have included higher levels of risk behavior and sexual experimentation. One serious question to be raised by the formation team regarding such candidates relates to their potential in the area of ministry. Given such a view of holiness, to whom and how will they serve in a church whose founder quite happily ate with "sinners" and challenged the "whitened sepulchres" of his day and age?

For members of the group whose personality inclines them to limit their exploration and resolve their maturational issues quickly, there is a need to determine whether the need for closure is motivated by anxiety, by a rigid adherence to traditional views, or by other factors. Some persons simply are more goal-focused than others and would find it difficult to make frequent changes in their aims and ambitions. Some have unique talents whose development tends to set them on a particular career path early in life. Others, however, seek closure based on the need to defend against separation anxiety. Their early decisions regarding marriage, career, or entrance into a

religious or priestly formation program may be a way of avoiding genuine independence, foregoing the stress of identity exploration by seeking a new attachment figure while maintaining a facade of maturity.

Motives such as these may be sufficient to encourage entrance into the priestly or religious lifestyle, but they do not constitute a firm foundation upon which to build a healthy identity as a priest or religious. If these motives surface before the person enters the program, it is likely that the person (as well as the community or seminary) would be best served by a period of further self-exploration, which ought to include concrete work experience and some form of counseling or psychotherapy. Sufficient contact ought to be maintained with these persons to show interest in the outcome of their search, but there should not be so much contact that their ability to explore other avenues is curtailed.

Because of their seeming maturity, many applicants make a highly favorable impression on vocation directors and admissions committees. It may be difficult to get beneath their facade of competence and independence to discern the fear and tension that urge them to seek a safe haven from their identity struggles. Some would appear to be wanting to put an end to questions of sexual identity and orientation by opting for a celibate lifestyle. Others seem overwhelmed by the variety of options set in front of them. Having no well-defined areas of interest or expertise, they seem content to do "whatever the superiors desire." Such issues tend to surface over time, however, especially if the candidate is willing to engage in counseling or spiritual direction with someone who is oriented toward developmental issues.

The time frame within which the work of the stage of emerging adulthood is conducted points to a need for directing attention and resources to persons between the ages of 18 and 25. For the most part, parish involvement is biased in favor of families, children, and, to a lesser extent, adolescents. As parishes age, services for the elderly are also provided. It is less typical, however, for parishes to seek out ways to attract and to influence emerging adults. In part, the mobility of the group makes it difficult to maintain contact. Many persons in this age bracket go through a period of distancing themselves from the church of their childhood in order to explore and formulate their own religious beliefs and are not likely to respond to outreach efforts. Others, however, tend to feel their needs are ignored and, while they might continue to maintain obligatory religious practices, look elsewhere for intellectual and social stimulation.

In light of limited resources, perhaps a regional effort to maintain connection would be more feasible.

This effort need not be limited to parish involvement but might include contributions of programs and personnel on the part of seminaries and religious communities in the area. Many emerging adults would welcome a forum for discussion, a place for shared prayer, and an opportunity to socialize with those who have similar values. Maintaining connections and offering guidance during a period of exploration that is sometimes confusing and unsettling could do much to keep the potential for religious commitment alive, in whatever form.

Erik Erikson suggested a virtue that reflected the task of each of the life stages he delineated. Arnett did not do the same, but I would suggest that his stage of emerging adulthood be marked by the virtues of discernment, acuteness of judgment, understanding, and insight, to assist our young people in their consideration of the options set before them and to guide them to life-enhancing choices and soul-satisfying commitments.

POSTSCRIPT

Since the writing of this article, our country has been subjected to terrorist attacks that have altered our worldview as well as our view of the future. The era of peace and prosperity that allowed young persons the luxury of devoting a period of years to exploration of themselves and their career options prior to making firm commitments seems to be drawing to a close in a rather dramatic fashion. At the moment, many college students are thinking more seriously of careers as agents or as technological intelligence workers in such organizations as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency. Others, however, are taking a more cautious "wait and see" approach, understandably reluctant to write off dreams that only a short time ago seemed not to be out of reach. The period of national mourning has stimulated awareness of the spiritual dimension of life, while the attacks themselves have highlighted the fleetingness of life. What effects these events will have on the development of those identified as emerging adults and on those soon to enter this stage of development remain to be seen. Will the possibility of

The effects of terrorism on the development of those identified as emerging adults and on those soon to enter this stage of development remain to be seen

a shortened life span stimulate early commitment to marriage and career path? Will the turning to prayer in this time of distress stimulate vocations to ordained ministry or religious life? Will this period of suffering result in a deeper commitment to building world peace and tolerance of differences? Or will our anxiety lead to a more rigid society in which exploration is curtailed and diversity of opinion or lifestyle is suspect? The future is unclear for all of us. More than ever, our emerging adults are in need of discernment to make the hard choices that will shape the coming generations of our country and our world.



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The Unstinting Praises

James Torrens, S.J.

Evensong

star of the city
evening promise
beauty of the west
you feed our longing

scent of the linden bloom
sweetness of daphne
be a benediction
to the souring world

rush of clear water
under our bridges
soothe all the eardrums
sated with clamor

air of expectation
blow through our curtains
puff on our low fires
make the flame leap up

Opus Dei (work of God): the phrase is resonant in Catholic circles these days, thanks to the religious movement and association of that name. We can remind ourselves, though—as this group would be quick to do—that *opus Dei* refers first of all to the divine liturgy, in particular the divine office, recited or chanted. Why not, for a moment, reflect on the divine office, this elaborate “work of God,” which still engages many of us daily?

In an era of spirituality tailored to the individual—a devout life fitting our form rather than a form for us to fit into—what can we say about something so time-honored and traditional, but also so fixed and possibly time-worn, as this prayer of the church? After forty years of pretty frequent recitation, I feel some need to hazard an estimate.

Mostly, I look forward to time with the breviary. That was not the case in my early years as a priest, when the Office was mostly what that term implies—something weighing on you. How long and repetitive and forbidding was the Liturgy of the Hours in Latin. When the Second Vatican Council called for its renovation and translation, what a relief that was—indeed, what a gift to the church.

Ideally, the Liturgy of the Hours is a prayerful climate, an opportunity for what it claims to be: “the divine praises.” It is something taken out of our hands; we don’t originate it, we give ourselves to it. It makes for an alternating current in our day, different from the performing of tasks, solving of problems, accomplishing of goals, exercising of abilities, complying with responsibilities. We get to be caught up in the accomplishments of God and to blend our voice into that of the church.

Not everything in the present breviary, or divine office, contributes to that end, so I would like to reflect on strengths and weaknesses. I do so wistfully more than with any sense of making a proposal. ICEL, the International Committee of English in the Liturgy, has pretty much been warned off from initiating texts, and it is not clear how renovation could happen otherwise. But one can still dream and keep asking, “How about it?”

The center of the divine office has always been the psalms. In the early Christian centuries, they shouldered all else aside and became the staple of the church’s prayer. The Latin breviary presented the whole psalter—all 150 psalms—for recitation weekly. We can certainly consider the corpus of psalms as inspired. There is nothing in hymnody or religious literature to match their expressiveness or the vision of the Creator that we get from our thirty or forty favorites among them. And there is some nugget of religious wisdom and aspiration buried in almost every one. But there is also a problem to be faced, sooner or later.

Even in their reduced daily number, the spectrum of psalms distributed over the course of four weeks may be too much of a good thing. I refer, first of all, to psalms that laud King David and his reign and ask success for his campaigns. Let Psalms 45 and 110, which I find increasingly difficult to enter, stand for the rest. But I refer most of all to the many that begin, and continue—as does Psalm 3, appearing right at the very start of the week—“How many are rising up against me! / How many are saying about me: ‘There is no help for him in God.’” Near the psalm’s conclusion we hear, “Arise, Lord; save me, my God, / you who strike all my foes on the mouth.”

At certain periods in life, our experience mirrors this outcry against hostile forces, and we long for payback to enemies of our human condition. Many people living under continual oppression can say a loud amen to Psalm 3. Furthermore, we have learned to read these words as applicable to the passion and death of Jesus and to pray some of these psalms in his own voice, asking, “Why have you abandoned me?” Thomas Merton’s *Bread in the Wilderness* and other monastic writings have taught us this spiritual sense

of the psalms and way of saying them. Still, in large doses, these sentiments do not correspond with the teachings of Jesus about love of enemies and about forgiveness, as spelled out in the Sermon on the Mount. To hear that gnashing of teeth so frequently in the psalms makes the spirit sink rather than rise.

Some of these prayers of desolation, like Psalm 69, are classic—part of our spiritual patrimony. Others could be thinned out. And to fill in the gaps? We already have canticles and praises from Exodus and Ezekiel and Tobias, from Colossians and Philippians and Revelations, seeded into the three-part ordering of psalms at the heart of the hours. Why not go farther afield and borrow from Saint Ephrem the Syrian or the Byzantine hours or the Malankar Catholic rite of South India (its lovely hymns to the divine light) or the *Book of Common Prayer*?

Speaking of untapped sources, we most need them to remedy the spottiness of the hymns that begin the liturgical hours. Some of these poetic texts fit well, if you have the music in your ears. I would cite, for example, “O God our help in ages past” or “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” The Office of Daytime Prayer provides the best options, available in the “Ordinary.” (I would be happy to see among them Ned O’Gorman’s fine translations of the old Latin hymns for Prime, Terce, etc., once published by *Jubilee*.)

For Morning Prayer, I often go to the “Poetry” appendix for Saint Augustine’s praises of the divine beauty or Saint Francis of Assisi’s “Canticle of the Sun.” For Evening Prayer, where the hymns are particularly flat, I reach much of the time for *The Catholic Prayer Book* of Monsignor Michael Buckley. It has a sampling of rhythmical texts, from the Didache to Saint Bonaventure and Saint Anselm to “Adoro te Devote” as translated by Hopkins and “Praise to the Holi-est” by Newman, down to Dag Hammarskjöld, Charles de Foucauld, Tagore, T. S. Eliot, and Thomas Merton. One hymn that I particularly love but have not seen in an accurate translation, “Phos Hilaron” (“Joyful Light”), would do perfectly for Compline.

In the Liturgy of the Hours today, the psalms are followed by a prayer that applies and rephrases what they express. These are well composed, a strong feature. Still, there should be room for prayers by Pope John XXIII or Pope John Paul II, say, or Newman or Augustine. A paperback issued from Dublin, *Praying with the Saints*, contains a spectrum of wonderful prayers from saints Aelred, Benedict, Clement, Thomas More, Thomas Aquinas, and others. We could add Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Therese of Lisieux, Mother Teresa. And we can mix in plenty of fine prayers from contemporary figures not officially saints but with a genuine spark.

The strongest feature of the current breviary, to my

mind, is the sequential reading of the scriptures. How helpful it is to have the entire Bible, in representative passages, unfolded before us yearly. Even if some major feast has crowded out the scripture of a given day, I try to catch up with the scripture somehow later. The Second Readings are equally welcome. I find that they reproduce the high points from that vade mecum of another era, the *Enchiridion Patristicum* of Rouet de Journel, S.J. We get a continual round of those classic statements about grace and the Eucharist and the development of doctrine by Saint Irenaeus and Saint Augustine and Vincent of Lerins. We get the Nativity sermons of Leo the Great and Saint Cyprian's treatise on the Our Father and Gregory of Nyssa and the Baptismal Catecheses of Clement of Jerusalem and all of Saint Ignatius of Antioch.

If that sounds pretty clerical, well, it is. But there is no good reason to stop with the time-tried and the heavyweights. Why not make some room for Jean Vanier, René Vouillaume, Brother Roger of Taizé, Dom Helder Camara, Dorothy Day, Romano Guardini, Chesterton, Anthony de Mello, Mother Teresa? What document do we have more stirring than the letter of the Trappist martyrs of Algeria, electing to stay in their place?

I was once at a loss as to what to do with the Office of Readings, as the morning was my natural time for

it, but Morning Prayer already occupied that space. I decided then to recite the psalms of Morning Prayer on even-numbered days and those of the Readings on odd-numbered days, and afterwards to do the Readings every day, to be followed by the Benedictus. An odd maneuver, no doubt, that made for a busy day—but no odder than finishing one hour and immediately starting another.

To conclude, the divine praises, *Opus Dei*, are not deprived of their ecclesial context and inspired content by some judicious effort to make them come more alive. The bishops of Vatican Council II showed us the way of effective renewal of the Liturgy of the Hours and, in doing so, opened the breviary to much wider lay participation. Forty years later, there is no good reason to consider the process closed. What truly matters, after all, is that the divine praises be unstinting.



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(signed) James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., Editor-in-Chief

Spirituality, Liturgy, and Biology

Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.

Father Ralph Bevins had begun his new parish assignment some three months ago. Already parishioners were comparing notes about their evaluation of the new associate pastor's effectiveness. Recently, after Sunday mass, I couldn't help but overhear a conversation evaluating the priest's homilies. A stylishly dressed, middle-aged woman was enthusiastically affirming the new associate's preaching style to two others parishioners. She mentioned that she had heard him preach four times and still remembered the main points of each homily. The other two agreed. Her remark piqued my curiosity, so a few minutes later I engaged the three in a brief discussion. As we talked, it became obvious that the priest was not simply a fine homilist; he was also an extraordinary liturgical planner and presider.

Why did I conclude this? As a psychiatrist with specialized training in neurobiology, I've become a reasonably skilled observer and interpreter of situations. The following sections describe some recent research that explores the biology of spiritual experience. That research emphasizes the neurobiological correlates of prayer and liturgical ritual and offers the basis for a reasonably convincingly explanation for the parishioners' highly positive response to Father Bevins. Hopefully, it will also provide food for thought to those who offer spiritual guidance on prayer, teach or plan liturgy, or are in other ways involved in the formation of candidates for ordained, religious, and lay ministries.

BIOLOGY IS INVOLVED

There is mounting evidence that religious and spiritual experiences, including mystical experiences, are not only common but are increasing in Western culture. While a national survey in 1975 indicated that 35 percent of adults polled reported experiencing a profound spiritual experience in their lives, a major study in 1990 revealed that nearly 70 percent of those studied reported having such experiences. These findings have been somewhat surprising to many. However, they have not strained credibility as much as recent scientific research indicating that religion and spirituality are interrelated with human biological structures, particularly the brain.

Prior to the 1970s, religious experience was believed to be a product of psychological need, social conditioning, and cultural mores. There was little hint that neurobiology was in any way involved in such spiritual activities as prayer and liturgy. This belief has been challenged by recent research conducted throughout the world. For example, researchers at the Center for Brain and Cognition at the University of California School of Medicine at San Diego recently concluded that religious and spiritual experience appear to be hard-wired in the brain. The phenomena of religious and spiritual experience are highly complex and involve thoughts, emotions, sensations, and behaviors.

Brain imaging research seems to indicate that the

There is mounting evidence that religious and spiritual experiences, including mystical experiences, are not only common but are increasing in Western culture

two basic parts of the nervous system, the arousal and the quiescent systems, are involved in such spiritual activities as prayer and ritual. More specifically, the temporal lobes, the so-called attention areas, the limbic system, and the hippocampus have now been shown to be intimately associated with religious feelings, beliefs, imagery, and behavior.

The temporal lobes have long been of interest to neuropsychiatrists and brain researchers because of the intense spiritual experiences reported by many temporal lobe epilepsy patients during seizure episodes. Accordingly, many physicians and scientists find the link between epilepsy and spirituality to be compelling. Some researchers have speculated that great mystics like Saint Paul and Saint Teresa of Avila probably experienced epileptic seizures. Until recently, there was no indication that the temporal lobes and attention areas were associated with spiritual experiences in normal, nonepileptic individuals. In 1997 brain researchers like V. S. Ramachandran of the Center for Brain and Cognition (University of California, San Diego) reported that temporal lobe activity increased almost to seizure levels when normal individuals were exposed to evocatively spiritual or religious words. In the ensuing years, others confirmed this observation.

I hasten to add that even though a brain structure or a given biological process or brain activity may be associated with spiritual experiences, that does not mean that spiritual experiences are caused by brain activity. Nor am I implying in any way that spiritual

experiences are, or can be reduced to, biological processes. Describing the nature of the relationship between the spiritual and biological dimensions is complex. Nevertheless, insists Kevin Culligan, O.C.D., in an article in *America* (March 22, 1997), individuals are "wired for God," meaning that we are biologically constituted in such a manner that personal faith in God promotes wellness and healing. He contends that this conclusion "squares with traditional Christian spirituality and is confirmed by contemporary physiological research."

BRAIN PROCESSES IN PRAYER

Studies of individuals who pray deeply and regularly reveal that they typically experience a sense of unity with God and the universe. What explains this experience, also called a unitary state?

"Deafferentiation" is the term used by Drs. Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and authors of *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience*, to describe the deprivation of neural input in certain brain structures resulting from overly high neural activity in one brain structure, which then exerts an inhibitory effect on neural activity in another brain structure. In short, a brain structure is cut off from sensory input or afferents. Deafferentiation leads to a blurring of the brain's sense of self, which subsequently results in the experience of a unitary state. In psychological terms, there is a softening of the boundaries of the self, such that it becomes more difficult for an individual to distinguish self from non-self. For instance, while sitting in a chair, a proficient meditator, after entering a deeper level of meditation, will no longer experience a sense of separateness between his or her body and the chair back. Rather, the meditator experiences a merging with the chair as the boundaries of the self become diffuse.

Unitary experiences span a continuum, from minimal (e.g., listening to engrossing music) to profound (e.g., deep mystical states). Throughout history, such practices and disciplines as prayer, chanting, and meditation were intuitively devised by spiritual masters to trigger the process of deafferentiation. The hoped-for result was some degree of unitary experience, which in turn reinforced and perpetuated the spiritual quest.

In their brain imaging studies, d'Aquili and Newberg have begun to identify specific regions of the brain associated with unitary states and other religious and spiritual experiences, such as experiences of awe and of peace. One series of studies compared two types of meditation, passive and active, in proficient meditators. Using SPECT (single photon emis-

sion computed tomography) scanning equipment, the researchers studied a group of Franciscan nuns utilizing an active form of meditation, centering prayer, which involves the interior repetition of a word or mantra (e.g., *Jesus*). The scans of this group showed activity in the attention area and the right parietal lobe. The parietal lobe is involved in the evaluation of the inflection and emotional weight of words and phrases. A comparison study involved experienced Tibetan Buddhist meditators who utilized a passive or emptying meditation approach. Their scans showed increased activity in the attention area but decreased activity in the parietal lobe. Increased activity in the attention area was noted in both groups of proficient meditators, but not in those without proficiency in meditation or those who did not report unitary experiences in prayer.

BRAIN PROCESSES IN RITUAL

Like deep meditative prayer, ritualized behavior allows participants to experience, if only momentarily, the transcendent spiritual unity that all religious systems promise. What involvement does the brain have in ritual and liturgy performance? The answer lies in the observation that from prehistoric times, religious stories and myths helped people make sense of things. Performing rituals arose from human efforts to act out these stories. Until recently, anthropologists believed that the urge to perform rituals was culturally driven. Current research suggests that the urge to enact rituals is also biologically driven and that it is triggered and modulated by specific neurological processes and regions of the brain.

The research team led by d'Aquili and Newberg is confident that they have mapped these ritual-focused brain regions and processes. They contend that the overall impact and effectiveness of a ritual depend on engaging all parts of the body and the brain. Only when there is a synthesis of rhythmic movement and religious meaning can rituals have a powerful impact. In short, effective rituals merge behaviors with religious words and myths.

According to d'Aquili and Newberg, the two main subsystems of the central nervous system—the arousal and the quiescent systems—are responsible for three basic religious and spiritual experiences: awe, peace, and unity. Psalms, hymns, chants, and other ritual forms can activate the quiescent system or the arousal system. Depending on the manner in which these ritual forms are operationalized, the resultant spiritual experience will be one of awe, peace, or unity.

For example, a slow, rhythmic hymn played on a pipe organ can result in a sense of tranquility and

peace as the quiescent system is activated. Adding a narration of God's immense love to that music can lead to an intensified sense of peacefulness. On the other hand, excitation of the arousal system is related to the experience of awe. Faster rhythmic movements, or slower movements such as a slow bow, extended hands, or prostration, can activate the arousal system and results in feelings of awe or even fear of God. These feelings can be augmented through the sense of smell. For example, if the presider, swinging an incenser, stops and bows deeply while the community sings a repeating refrain, the sense of religious awe will be greatly intensified. On the other hand, if the presider does not bow deeply or if the singing of the repeating refrain is removed, it is likely that the intensity of the experience of awe will be decreased. Furthermore, d'Aquili and Newberg note that in a liturgical context, it appears that activating both the arousal and quiescent systems results in the feeling or experience of unity. In other words, activation of the arousal system in the presence of an underlying quiescent state will result in a feeling of unity in addition to a sense of awe. They add:

A liturgical sequence that employs both aspects of arousal and quiescence—some rapid songs, some slow hymns; some words of love, some words of fear; stories of glory, stories with morals; prayers exalting God and prayers asking for help—will allow for the participants to experience religion in the most powerful way. They will experience the profound peace of the love of God, fear and awe of the power of God, and a strong sense of what is right. . . . If a ritual has just the right rhythms, however, then the participants may briefly experience something further. If the arousal and quiescent systems are activated during ritual they may experience . . . a sense of unity with each other because they are all taking part in the same ritual.

APPLYING THE SCIENCE

What are the implications of these findings for formation and pastoral ministry? A theoretical model of ritual can provide some general guidelines for planning liturgies that can affect either the quiescent system or the arousal system, depending on the purpose of the liturgy. If the intention is to give the faith community a sense of awe, then music and words are chosen that are most likely to activate the arousal system. On the other hand, if the intention is for the community to experience some of the immensity of God's love for them, then a liturgy that directs the quiescent system toward God will be chosen. Finally, if the intention is to achieve a sense of unity with God as well as within the community, then music, words,

Current research suggests that the urge to enact rituals is in part biologically driven, triggered and modulated by specific neurological processes and regions of the brain

and actions that incorporate both the arousal and quiescent systems will be planned.

REVISITING PARISH LITURGIES

What bearing, if any, do this research and its implications have on the parishioners' evaluation of Father Bevins? Like the three women, I too had observed the new priest on four or five occasions and had mentally noted a number of intriguing features of his liturgical presiding. For instance, there was a rhythmic quality to his presiding and preaching, a changing tone and pitch of his voice, a unique way of inserting the key point of his homily as he framed the liturgy in his welcoming remarks to the congregation, as well as in the prayer intentions, the prayer of the faithful, and the final blessing. Particularly notable was his ceremonial blessing of the congregation with Easter water, accompanied by deeply moving lyrics. During these and other liturgical moments, it appears that Father Bevins created an atmosphere conducive to the spiritual experiences of awe, peace, and unity. Was this a consciously planned behavior on his part? In the course of speaking with him about his liturgical presiding, I learned that he was unaware of the research on the brain's role in spirituality and ritual. He insisted that his only intention was to make the liturgies a prayerful experience for the community. Nevertheless, it seems to me that he intuitively and rather naturally utilized a rhythmic pace to create an atmosphere and sense of peace, and at

times shifted his intonation, made deep bows, and used words and hand and arm movements to foster awe and unity. I also noted that the parishioners attending the liturgies at which he presided not only sang and prayed more reverently but also seemed to be more genuine and emotionally available to others while sharing the kiss of peace. In other words, these liturgies became occasions of spiritual self-transcendence for them—occasions for them to more fully become a worshipping and caring community.

Perhaps it is not too surprising that the three women focused on the priest's homilies. After all, a homily is largely a verbal and rational experience, whereas the experiences of awe, peace, and unity are largely nonverbal and nonrational. Accordingly, the women's way of verbally and rationally explaining their experience of awe, peace, and unity was to attribute all their positive sentiments to the homilies and thus evaluate the homilies in glowing terms. This phenomenon is called the halo effect. Even if the homilies were objectively rated as reasonably well-crafted and presented, they would be subjectively rated as superior and memorable if the overall liturgical experience sufficiently activated the spiritual sense of awe, peace, and unity. The obverse has also been noted: an excellent homily may be subjectively rated as average when the overall liturgical experience is relatively devoid of the spiritual sense of awe, peace, and unity. In this particular instance, Father Bevins is objectively a fine homilist, and he is also an extraordinary effective liturgical presider. While not everyone is similarly skilled and effective in homiletics, the research reported here lends itself to the development of guidelines that might be quite useful in planning prayer experiences and liturgies that foster spiritual growth and development in faith communities.

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Self-Care Advice for Caregivers

Margaret M. Riordan, R.S.M., M.B.A.

When was the last time you inquired about the health and well-being of a caregiver? If you are a caregiver, when was the last time you reviewed your own plan of self-care?

The word *caregiver* not only designates professionals whose occupation is to provide expert service to needy individuals; it also applies to inexperienced volunteers who find themselves assuming the additional roles and complex responsibilities of primary caregiver for infirm family members, spouses, parishioners, relatives, or friends on a daily or frequent basis. The number of people in this predicament has been steadily increasing as a result of changing societal circumstances. However, these volunteers (and often professionals relating to them) fail to realize the multifaceted implications of caregiving for the lives of individuals, families, and communities, as well as the critical need for self-care.

My awareness and concern for caregivers evolved from reflecting on my own and others' experiences, and I invite you to ponder your experience as you peruse this article. During my many years as a health care administrator, I was involved in developing policies and procedures to ensure that our personnel remained healthy themselves while caring for others. Some years later, as a recipient of care myself, I noticed some of the stresses experienced by caregivers

living with a person who required assistance for an extended period.

However, my genuine understanding developed from encountering the needs within my own family, so let me briefly relate my story. In their aging years, my parents moved into their own private area within my brother and sister-in-law's home. My brother had six children, and after two of them had married and had children, four generations were present when our family assembled.

After my mother's death, my father was able to maintain his independence for a while. He never lost his mental ability or his sense of humor, and regular visits from the younger generations kept him active and in touch with everyday life. Then Dad's physical health began to deteriorate. He was hospitalized on several occasions, and as he grew older and more frail, my brother and sister-in-law gradually assumed responsibility for more of his care. My sister-in-law became his primary caregiver. Initially, this involved assistance with grocery shopping, meal preparation, housekeeping, and laundry.

Over the years, the tasks expanded to include phoning and traveling to doctors' offices, locating necessary resources, scheduling and communicating with professional help when Dad was on home care for a time, learning how to procure special medical equip-

ment and supplies, changing dressings, monitoring and dispensing medications, assisting Dad with activities of daily living, facilitating his exercise program, and providing emotional and spiritual support and reassurance. During the night, it meant listening to the intercom that connected my brother and sister-in-law's bedroom with Dad's. Despite suitable care and preventive measures, falls occurred on more than one occasion.

While my sister-in-law principally coordinated Dad's everyday medical and personal needs, my brother helped with such things as insurance and financial issues, haircuts, transportation to medical appointments, and helping Dad get into and out of the car. Living in a continual state of readiness for any eventuality inevitably brought with it signs of fatigue and stress. Providentially, around that time, I began ministering in an area near my family, so I was able to provide some respite on a regular basis for my brother and sister-in-law. We also had to enlist the service of a home health aide for a few hours each day in Dad's final years.

My Dad died at the age of 94, sitting on his couch, enjoying a baseball game on television. In many ways, caring for him at home was a time of blessing for us as a family. However, our experience—and that of many members of my religious community, relatives and friends, who have been or are now functioning as primary caregivers—awakened me to the magnitude of the issues involved and to a real awareness of the need that volunteer caregivers have for self-care.

Professional caregivers, benefiting from extensive training, ongoing supervision, professional reading, and continuing education, are cognizant of the risks and potential hazards inherent in their chosen occupation. However, even with that amount of support and awareness, they often fall into the trap of overextending themselves and may succumb to one form of illness or another.

Other caregivers, such as family members, parish visitors, hospice volunteers, relatives, or friends, often do not have access to the same kind of professional training and support, so I believe they are even more at risk for jeopardizing their own health if they do not take appropriate measures to safeguard it. The risks increase with the intensity of the caregiving required and the issues and stresses inherent in relating to a multiplicity of complex, interdependent, and interlocking systems.

CAREGIVING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

We live in a highly scientific era, characterized by the rapid development of medical and technological advances that have enabled people to survive life-

threatening illnesses and to live longer, but not necessarily healthier, lives.

Today the elderly community is the fastest-growing segment of the population. Although illness and disability often accompany old age, both our health care and managed-care insurance systems are largely directed toward acute and intensive care rather than care of the elderly or chronically ill. Moreover, the intensifying focus on cost containment has tended to create an atmosphere of dehumanization and depersonalization, and preestablished diagnosis-related reimbursement fees have resulted in shorter hospital stays. Chronically ill patients requiring complicated medical treatments or equipment, and even terminally ill people, are being discharged to home and often to ill-prepared caregivers. Spouses are usually the same age as their loved ones and frequently need care themselves. Also, many members of what has been termed the "sandwich generation," along with performing the ordinary tasks of daily living, find themselves caring for one and sometimes two generations at home.

Illness is a systemic problem with a ripple effect that involves the primary caregiver in an unfamiliar morass, a complex network of relationships and systems. Family caregivers, particularly those in live-in situations, may not realize that a drastic change of thinking and lifestyle is required and that a significant amount of time and energy must be invested. This is even more significant if the person needing care is memory-impaired. Caregivers must have the maturity and capacity to quickly obtain information, assess the situation, make a fitting judgment, and take appropriate action under diverse and changing circumstances. When suddenly confronted with difficult decisions and the reversal of roles resulting from a parent's infirmity, many family caregivers feel frustrated, confused, and overwhelmed.

Subconscious multigenerational family patterns and implicit rules may influence or even dictate the designation and roles of the primary family caregiver. For example, a woman, the oldest child, or a health care professional in the family may be expected to assume these responsibilities. However, if caregiving is not a freely chosen role, it could lead to feelings of anger, resentment, and hostility in the caregiver and to a potentially dangerous situation for the frail elderly person or dependent. Both elder and child abuse have been recognized as social evils of our era.

Financial and social circumstances also complicate the situation. As indicated previously, our family eventually was forced to seek outside assistance to help care for my father. However, many health insurance plans do not cover home care services, and

caregivers may not have the resources to access such greatly needed support services. Even if they can afford these services, they may have difficulty finding competent, compassionate people with whom to entrust their loved one's care. Lack of confidence in the respite caregiver only increases the primary caregiver's stress and defeats the desired purpose of time away. In addition, the reality of smaller families and a predominantly mobile population often results in extended-family members' living long distances from their family of origin. This precludes the likelihood of siblings' assuming their share of the family caregiving responsibilities.

Caregiving for the elderly and disabled has increasingly become a prominent issue in the workplace as well. When a caregiver is absent or needs to leave work suddenly, this results in unproductive time for the employer and, most probably, in a reduction in wages for the caregiver. Hourly employees may even be terminated or forced to quit their jobs. Employees who are in positions that allow flexible work time to accommodate caregiving needs may find themselves passed over for promotions. In the end, the employer may lose a valued, trained employee, and the caregiving employee may face financial ruin because of rising medical expenses, inadequate or no insurance coverage, or pending or actual unemployment.

Women in our society continue to be socialized as caregivers and frequently serve as the primary caregiver. However, women in the workplace do not earn as much as their male counterparts, so they have less income to apply to caregiving-related expenses. Also, if a woman is juggling a career and managing the care of both elders and children, the multiple demands on her time and energy will limit the attention she can give to her work, herself, and her family. On the other hand, men may be particularly stressed by their lack of familiarity with activities of daily living, such as cooking, shopping, doing laundry, and cleaning.

If not properly managed, the cumulative stresses imposed by these issues and concerns, combined with the daily caregiving roles and responsibilities, have the potential to pose a significant danger to the well-being of caregivers. Unrelieved stress can affect their physical health, threaten their psychological wholeness, and weaken their spiritual development.

PITFALLS OF CAREGIVING

It is helpful to understand the manner in which stress affects the human body. When an individual experiences stress, the autonomic nervous system reacts, and the body prepares to fight or escape. As a re-

sult, hormones are released into the bloodstream that increase the heart and breath rate, elevate the blood sugar, dilate the pupils, increase perspiration, and slow digestion. This is an automatic bodily response that prepares the person for action. When action is taken and the stress decreases, the body returns to normal. However, if no action is taken and the stress continues, exhaustion sets in, and stress-related disorders may result.

The scope of this article does not permit the detailing of all possible stress-related ailments, but stress and its effects can lead to physical problems, ranging from heart disease to death. Headache, back pain, gastrointestinal problems, obesity, diabetes, and hypertension are among the most common stress-related physical disorders. Moreover, prolonged, unrelieved stress depresses the immune system, so it lowers the body's ability to fend off other diseases as well.

Caregivers may also experience psychological and emotional difficulties. They may suffer from anxiety, depression, or burnout, a word commonly associated with job stress. In a caregiver, these feelings may develop because of worry over some of the issues presented previously, concern about the infirm person's deteriorating health, change of lifestyle, lack of privacy, or the social isolation often imposed by the caregiving situation. Caregivers may avoid socializing because of embarrassment or fatigue. For example, caregivers may feel that they cannot leave an infirm individual alone or invite visitors in because of the person's behavior or disability. A person with hearing impairment or Alzheimer's disease may interrupt conversations or pace constantly. Furthermore, a family caregiver who works during the day and cares for a parent, spouse, or child during the night may not have the physical or psychic energy to socialize.

Caregivers who find that there is no leisure time for the usual restorative activities may adopt unhealthy behaviors and addictions as a way of coping with their dilemmas and relieving stress. Addiction can take many forms, ranging from inappropriate use of drugs and alcohol to excesses of nicotine, food, work, or perfectionism.

Some infirm or disabled people can be troublesome beyond their physical needs. If they are irritable, critical, demanding, or ungrateful, they can instill fear, anger, irrational guilt, or desperation in a caregiver. On more than one occasion, I have listened to the frustrations expressed by compassionate caregivers or visitors to the homebound who struggle with their felt resistance to care for a particular person because of that individual's irascible personality. It is not difficult to understand their predicament.

A married caregiver may experience guilt or hope-

lessness because he or she is unable to satisfy the multiple, and sometimes conflicting, demands of parents, spouse, siblings, and children. Dissatisfaction with one's perceived ability to handle and fulfill the infirm person's needs, employer's demands, spouse's and/or children's desires, and siblings' expectations may even result in feelings of despair. When the caregiver is powerless to change the outcome of a loved one's infirmity, an unresolved sense of helplessness may develop into depression characterized by mood changes or physical complaints such as pain, loss of appetite, changes in sleep patterns, and lack of energy. The caregiver may even become so discouraged as to be tempted to give up caring altogether.

These difficulties may be more common among live-in caregivers. However, anyone who empathically cares for others may experience what Laurie Anne Pearlman calls "vicarious traumatization"—the cumulative effect of listening to and caring for a survivor of traumatic life events over time. The inner transformation that takes place may cause a compassionate caregiver to mirror the same fears, pain, and suffering that the infirm person is feeling.

If the caregiver succumbs to a physical and/or emotional illness, his or her spiritual well-being will also be adversely affected because of the integral connection of body, mind, and spirit. Anyone who has experienced an ailment knows that illness, even a common cold, dramatically affects one's whole being and relationships. Wholeness and holiness go hand in hand, so sickness can impede one's ability to relate intimately not only to self and others but also to God.

Physical and emotional fatigue may block the caregiver's spiritual receptivity and result in spiritual dryness and desolation. A caregiver may become angry at God for not answering his or her prayers for another's healing, or may feel abandoned or punished by God. This predicament can leave the caregiver feeling isolated, vulnerable, and unable to tap into God's power and his or her own inner strength. Having lost this ability, caregivers have nothing to carry them through difficult times. They no longer have the resources so essential for perseverance with caregiving tasks.

The task of listening can also create a spiritual crisis within caregivers. Illness and aging often put infirm people in touch with deeper levels as they search for the meaning of life and attempt to deal with life's critical questions. When my father began the process of reviewing his life, I sometimes found myself assuming the role of a spiritual counselor as I listened empathically to his deep religious questions and concerns and supported his continuing search for spiritual strength, courage, and perseverance. My studies in spirituality and my training as a spiritual director

were particularly helpful to me as I endeavored to facilitate his spiritual journey. This was an especially graced and privileged time for me, because I heard many wonderful humorous and faith-filled stories as Dad processed his life's journey. However, I am also aware of how difficult this process can be, particularly for unskilled caregivers. "Vicarious traumatization" or "compassion fatigue" can also carry over into the spiritual state of caregivers, sometimes leading them to doubt their own fundamental religious tenets or adopt warped images of God. Spiritual depletion is not as apparent as physical, emotional, or behavioral difficulties. Shaken to one's faith foundations and faced with the immutable progression of the infirm person's illness, the caregiver's own faith, hope, ability to love, and courage to go on may be threatened insidiously. The outcome can be spiritual confusion for both the caregiver and the infirm person.

Regardless of whether the pitfalls are designated as physical, psychological, or spiritual, caregivers are at significant risk to develop symptoms similar to those just summarized if they do not take proper precautions to maintain their own health and well-being.

ADVICE FOR CAREGIVERS

There are ways to deal appropriately with the caregiving situation. Prevention and intervention are possible. Caregivers need to develop a plan of self-care by pursuing safe, realistic coping strategies to continually renew themselves. This plan does not need to be elaborate, expensive, or time-consuming. In addition to finding alternate ways of obtaining prescription drugs (mail order or delivery services), transportation (Council of Churches and Synagogues), housekeeping (Home Health Agency), shopping (high-school or college students), food (Meals on Wheels), or completion of insurance forms (senior citizen organizations), it may include such basic elements as the following:

- prayer and reflection
- reading or listening to music
- watching a movie or video
- savoring a bath or shower
- walking or other exercise
- eating healthy foods
- getting enough sleep
- finding ways to laugh (e.g., watching children play)
- keeping their environment bright and cheerful with flowers or plants
- visiting with friends
- having a pet
- writing personal feelings in a journal or sharing them with a trusted person

It is particularly advisable to seek help with the caregiving tasks and/or to ask for emotional support from neighbors, friends, relatives or professional organizations. The important thing is to achieve balance in one's life by identifying and acknowledging one's own needs, honoring them in realistic, healthy, and enjoyable ways, and assiduously adhering to a personally tailored plan of self-renewal.

GIFTS OF CAREGIVING

Taking appropriate care of oneself in ways such as these not only helps the caregiver to better care for the ill person but also enables the caregiver to appreciate the many gifts that caregiving offers to oneself. Whether this service is provided at home or in a healthcare facility, the very performance of caregiving contains gifts and graces for the caregiver who is able to recognize and accept them. Only whole persons who have found specific ways to cope suitably can discover these inherent gifts.

The time I spent with my father in his final years was often painful as I watched his progressive physical deterioration, but I will always cherish that time. It afforded me the opportunity and the privilege of sharing deeply and caring lovingly for someone who had cared for me over the years, and it witnessed for me how to grow old gracefully and graciously. The experience gave me a better appreciation of time and the preciousness of life itself, an enhanced sense of life's meaning and purpose, and an awareness of our inner strength, patience, endurance, and capacity to love. The ability to share some caregiving responsibilities with my family provided us all with opportunities for mutual moral support, empathy, gentle guidance, greater understanding, shared wisdom, love, and gratitude. Caregiving can also strengthen one's organizational and communication skills and lead to the discovery of previously unknown or unused abilities, talents, and skills. I also discovered that it can generate an appreciation of one's own needs and limitations, expose the caregiver to anticipatory grief, and offer ways of dealing with one's own mortality.

Although the information provided in this article often focuses on the primary caregiver within the family setting, I believe the intrinsic potential for harm and the corresponding need for self-care are applicable to all caregivers. A caregiver may be overwhelmed not only by dealing with the social/cultural, scientific/medical, and economic/financial issues but also by relating to health care, insurance, employment, and family systems. However, when caregivers

acknowledge the risks, recognize their own unique needs and limitations, and develop ongoing, sustaining self-care action plans, they can cope with the hazards in a physically, psychologically, and spiritually healthy manner. This will enable them to maintain and enhance the care and welfare of the people they serve and enjoy the many positive gifts and benefits that compassionate caring for another offers.

As a result of my experience, I am even more convinced that the multiple and varied risks inherent in the caregiving role need to be communicated to the steadily increasing population of compassionate informal caregivers. I believe the need for additional caregivers is great, but the need for healthy caregivers is fundamental to the caregiving role. As more family members, pastoral ministers, and parish volunteers become involved in the sacred ministry of caregiving, they must be made aware not only of methods to satisfy others' needs but also of the importance of taking proper care of their own physical, psychological, and spiritual needs through sufficient rest, relaxation, and prayer.

Some agencies, health care institutions, organizations, associations, parishes, and groups are providing much-needed assistance to the volunteer caregiver, and public policies and systems are slowly changing to acknowledge and help family caregivers. However, much more needs to be done by both the public and private sectors.

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An Identity for Priests Today

Reverend Roger A. Statnick, Ph.D.

Some priests are confused, angry, and uncertain about themselves and their place in the church. The events of the past two decades have wreaked havoc within a fraternity that was once strong and secure among God's people but now suffers from low morale. The people are sometimes caught in this malaise as well; they have been gravely hurt by the breaches of trust some of their priests have committed. They want to help with both ministry and support, but at times they don't know how. The whole church is struggling to become something broader and deeper in its community of life than it thought itself to be. Such is the dilemma of priestly identity today. It involves all who claim the Catholic church as their home in faith, and its solution lies in looking at the whole church's fidelity to Christ and his mission.

The identity of the ordained rests first on some fundamental theological understandings about a person's identity with Christ and the church. Building on this foundation, the sacrament of ordination then theologically specifies and clarifies the meaning of orders. Finally, this theological identity is further translated into the spirituality of the ordained as the exercises of the spiritual life are shaped and informed by the sacramental character of ordination and its concomitant ministry. This article explores these three aspects of the identity of the ordained.

Our Catholic Christian faith includes for all of us two fundamental elements: personal discipleship and ecclesial ministry for service. Yet ordination shapes these two elements in specific ways arising from the character of that sacrament. To identify ourselves as priests, we must explore both dimensions that arise from our faith—namely, what we share in common with all the people of God who constitute the church, and what distinguishes us among this people while we remain always a part of this larger life and mission.

DISCIPLES IN COMMUNION

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—the initiation sacraments—introduce all believers into the shared life of Christ as communal disciples. This divine sharing is a twofold reality. On the one hand, we as disciples have a very personal relationship with Christ. We are connected to the saving paschal mystery in a unique way, knowing the call, the conversion, and the commissioning of grace as an individual human being in an intimate relationship that is deeper and more profound than our genetic makeup. Discipleship cannot be cloned to identical forms of faithfulness. It bears the marks of each person, just as the first disciples show so clearly. Peter was not

Paul; Mary Magdalene was not Mary, the mother of Jesus. Their discipleship took on the character of each person, and the particulars of their call, conversion, and commissioning reflect this uniqueness. That is why Pope John Paul II's constant exhortation to respect the dignity of each person is so critical. Christian discipleship demands it and dissolves without it.

On the other hand, while our relationship to Christ is unique for each of us, it is shared by all who claim discipleship. What is most distinguishing about each of us in our faith is also what binds us to one another, and these two dimensions cannot be separated without both being lost. Our personal discipleship is also a common one.

Therefore, it marks us with a communion of life in Christ. As disciples, we rely upon each other; we are responsible to each other and the communion we share; we are brought into a network of relationships created by and meant to serve the shared relationship we each have with Christ through our initiation into his saving mystery.

Every initiated Catholic Christian bears these marks of discipleship to Christ—unique and personal, shared and communal—and the ordained clergy are no exception. The first roots of priestly identity are common to all in the church. As the ordained, we remain always members of the church through our discipleship, and all the implications of this shared relationship continue to bear upon us in our office.

Consequently, we must exercise our ordained ministry with respect for each person we encounter in this ministry, with accountability to the communion of discipleship in the church, and with the ethical standards that reflect this respect for persons and accountability. In addition, we cannot presume to exercise ordained ministry and ignore the growth and maturity of our discipleship to Christ. Personal and shared prayer, discipline, study, guidance, reflection, and renewed effort remain part of our life, and without these, we wash away the very foundation of the ordained life and ministry. These are the exercises for continuing growth in discipleship to Christ.

A LEADING WITNESS

The discipleship that roots and binds us to Christ and the church takes on a distinguishing character when the disciple becomes an ordained member of the communion. He no longer simply stands among and with the other disciples in their personal yet shared relationship with Christ. He also stands in front of this communion of disciples as a leader, an incarnate witness to Christ's headship over each and

all. The ordained person is repositioned within the communion of disciples, and this new position reorients the relationships of his discipleship. Now his personal and shared communion with Christ is as a leader of other disciples in this communion. As Robert Frost aptly wrote about taking a particular turn in the common forest of life, "that has made all the difference."

As priests, our personal relationship with Christ is placed at the disposal of other disciples. In a real sense, our intimacy with the Lord goes on display because of the public character of our position in the church. Such exposure can be fraught with all sorts of vulnerability, producing anxiety and defensiveness about ourselves. After all, on the level of our personal discipleship, we are like the rest of men and women—weak, sinful, inconsistent, unsure at times. We rely on Christ and the support of other disciples in order to carry on, and we make no claims to superiority, invincibility, or enlightenment based on our own merits. So how do we stand before others as leaders of the church? What can we claim as the warrants of our ordained position? As always, we need to look to Christ to show us how to lead.

For our sakes, he led the way to the Father. For our sakes, he opened his arms on the cross. For our sakes, he sent the Spirit as Paraclete to comfort and guide. It was precisely through his vulnerability that Christ led the first disciples to the way of salvation. His vulnerability was placed in front of the communion of disciples to help them come to terms both with their faith and their infidelity. Accusation, imposition, or edict does not provoke Christian discipleship and its communion, for it focuses too much on the leader. Only a witness given so that others can see themselves in the light of God's grace truly stands in front of the church as Christ stood before the people. Ordination commissions such a witness. The rite for ordaining deacons states it clearly: "Believe what you read; teach what you believe; practice what you teach."

This witness created by ordination informs every aspect of the ordained's personal and shared discipleship. He can retain little of a "private" spirituality, in the sense of an isolated, self-involved, self-absorbed search for holiness. Rather, his discipleship grows and matures as his witness does, and both of these dimensions of his faith test each other's authenticity. So his prayer becomes prayer of and for the church, typified most clearly in the Liturgy of the Hours. Discipline is set by the obligations of ordained ministry to function fully and consciously in the exercise of one's office. Study focuses on an ever-deepening understanding of the tradition and the human condition in which we embody this tradition.

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Guidance comes from the many partners in faith the priest encounters in carrying out his witness. Some are staff, some parishioners, some friends, and perhaps one is a spiritual director, a soul friend, who understands and guides like no other. The priest's reflection finds its object in the experience of ministry and the texts of the tradition, especially the readings for Sunday Eucharist. This is the stuff from which his faith-filled reflection must mine the word and hand of God for both himself and his fellow disciples. Finally, his efforts toward growth as a disciple now have a specific focus. The priest's spiritual exercises aim at one objective—to realize the public witness his ordination marks *in potentia*, as a sacrament.

The ordained grow in discipleship, personally and communally, by becoming a clearer and more authentic witness to the church itself, and to the world of which the church is part. Ordination marks a man as standing for Christ (*in persona Christi*) by marking him as standing before the church (*in persona ecclesiae*). The two are inseparable and dynamically interrelated, and this establishes a unique identity for the ordained.

All initiated members are marked as other Christs (*alter Christi*), for this is what it means to be incorporated personally into the shared mystery of salvation. But the ordained, as leaders in the faith, are called to place this Catholic Christian identity at the disposal of others. They stand before the church in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) and in the

person of the church (*in persona ecclesiae*)—not to lord it over the communion or to presume to be a closer disciple to Christ by this designation, but to provide a mirror for the communal discipleship that all share in personal relationship to Christ. This is what an ordained public witness does. He shows us ourselves by being a sacrament to the communion, a sign of both who we are and who we are yet called to be.

MARKS OF ORDINATION

Ordination must function as does any other sacrament to be a fully effective sign. That calls for three things from the ordained minister: to be fully and actively participatory; to dispose humanity to become the medium of grace; and to be ecclesial.

The document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* sets one clear objective for the liturgical reforms of Vatican II: “the full and active participation by all the people” who celebrate these rites. This aim also points beyond liturgy to the life of discipleship celebrated and nourished in the ritual. The sacrament of ordination does not bestow a private possession for the sanctity of the priest. It does affect the ordained's sanctity, but not in that way. Rather, ordination positions one to witness to a “full and active participation” in the life of Christ through the shared communion of the church. Note the intimate and intrinsic relationship here: one participates in Christ's life by participation in the communion of life created in Christ. There is no room for private, isolated spiritual intimacy here as a warrant for one's authority in the community. Authority arises from the shared communion of discipleship to Christ as its basic warrant. Like the Trinity, which is its source, such communion must be dynamic and inclusive while respecting the unique character of each person and his or her particular place in the sharing of divine life.

Also, like God's own Trinitarian life, the “full and active participation” that is this reality cannot be self-enclosed or self-absorbed. As Karl Rahner so aptly observed decades ago, the immanent and economic Trinity is one. In other words, God exists to create and save. Divine life is a life of relationship for the sake of God's mission to the world. To be a sacrament of such life, which we enter through our discipleship to Christ, the ordained must witness to this mission as the reason for Christ's paschal mystery and the communion it creates and sustains. So as priests, we share and lead relationships formed by and for the mission of Christ in the church. We lead others in the person of Christ as Christ led them, for the work of salvation, and we stand before the church as a sign that this agenda is the only sustaining one

for our shared discipleship. Collaboration stands on this foundation and takes its character from these relationships for the mission. It is not community building for its own sake, nor is it a democratizing of the church by popular demand. Collaboration is the way that we as ordained members make operative both our sacramental identity as leaders *in persona Christi et ecclesiae* and the participation in the mission of Christ, which all disciples share.

The second mark that ordination displays as a sacrament of our shared Christian discipleship is that of the workings of grace. Fundamental to our tradition is the notion that grace builds on nature. God chose to take the basic dimensions of our human life, its nature and conditions, as the arena for the saving work of the paschal mystery. Ordained life and ministry must reflect this divine prerogative.

The ordained need to reflect a comfort with both their own humanity and that of others. Such witness reaches in two directions that reveal the saving action of God. On the one hand, the ordained acknowledge and accept the weakness, sin, and limitations of their own and others' humanity. The sexual, financial, and conflictual scandals of the past decades place this reality squarely before the church's view. How the ordained respond to this darkness in their fellows' humanity is critical for their witness as a sacrament. To deny it by misleading remarks or silence, to justify it by blaming another, or to disregard it by dismissing its significance and impact on the communion is to be coopted by that darkness and to refuse to recognize our sin and the power of divine mercy.

On the other hand, the ordained must stand for the possibility of goodness, truth, and beauty within this fragile human frame of ours. We are signs of what still can be within the mix of stark reality. We are called to witness to the nobility of our human nature, but not by some innocent naiveté or immature frivolity in the face of life's harshness. Rather, we provide this witness by not giving up on humanity, our own or any one else's; by inspiring others with our words and example; by being a beacon of hope, not in ourselves but in God, who never abandons, is ever creative, and in whom nothing is impossible. The ordained stand proleptically before the church, to lead it into a future that is unknown in its contingencies but is set on its destiny for incorporation into the kingdom of God. In this way, we are men of hope, for while we acknowledge that nature can resist grace, in daring to be ordained we proclaim—weak and sinful though we are—that nature ultimately is transformed by grace in resurrected life.

Finally, a formal witness to the ecclesial character of shared discipleship marks the sacrament of ordination. A man is called by the church, from the

church, for the sake of the church's mission to become a member of a particular *collegium* within the church communion. The sacrament reflects all of these ecclesial dimensions, and it is fully realized when they are made operative and effective in the ordained's life and the church's life. One particular aspect of this ecclesial dimension is of note in ordination.

All initiated members are called by and from the church for its mission. But the efficacy of the sacrament of ordination brings to bear on the ordained priest a distinct ecclesial reality: the presbyterate and its relationship to the bishop. Those two aspects of the distinct ecclesial reality of ordination depend on each other to fulfill the purpose of their sacramental role. This is clearly seen in the ritual of presbyterial ordination itself.

First, the bishop imposes hands on the man to be ordained; then the presbyters who are present for the rite do the same in turn; finally, the bishop leads the presbyterate in the consecratory prayer completing the ordination. All of this ritual is enacted before and in the midst of the whole church assembly. It is all there in a ritual tableau. The bishop leads the action; the presbyterate follows his lead and forms a *collegium* in the process; and the church is the context and the purpose for it all. This ritual should make it clear to all how ordination repositions the one ordained in the church—more directly under the bishop's leadership, yet as part of a body of fellow presbyters. Far from separating and setting apart in an elitist fashion, ordination immerses a man more fully into the communion of disciples by certain sacramentally specified links to bishop, fellow priests, and the general assembly.

I spoke earlier of the priest's leadership as a public witness to the communion of discipleship in and through which the church is formed. But now we must recognize that such a leading witness can only be authentic if it incorporates in its identity and actions the episcopal and collegial character formed by the relationships ordination creates. These must be rooted in the fundamental theological principles of the church for them to fulfill the intentions of the sacrament, rather than in the personal and often self-serving purposes of the various agents involved.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

We remain disciples in communion for the mission of Christ. Bishop-priest and priest-priest relations must never forget this foundation or seek another. To do so is to betray our ordinations and to give scandal to the whole church—and even at times to the world beyond the church. Here is the beginning of an ex-

Bishops should be encouraging unity among the priests of the local church by inviting them to share in the tasks of governing, sanctifying, and teaching the communion of disciples

amination of consciousness about how true we are to the ecclesial dimensions of our ordinations.

- What is my dominant operative image of the bishop: boss, parent, friend, bureaucrat, socialite, royalty? Or apostle, shepherd, evangelizer, overseer, pastor?
- What is my dominant operative image of myself as a priest in relationship with the bishop: employee, friend, son, court official, house or field servant? Or counselor, elder, delegate, partner, junior fellow?
- What is my dominant operative image of my fellow priests: friends, competitors, siblings, private entrepreneurs, business partners, union members? Or colleagues, partners, fellow disciples, collaborators, missionaries, council members?
- What is my dominant operative image of the people: ignorant masses, fan club, country club, work force, children? Or fellow disciples, Christ's flock, God's people, companions on faith's journey, sharers in the mystery of communion?
- What is my dominant operative image of myself as a priest in relationship with the people: boss, parent, friend, bureaucrat, socialite, royalty? Or apostle, shepherd, evangelizer, overseer, pastor? (*See image of bishop, above.*)
- What is the people's dominant operative image of me as a priest: answer man, father figure, one of

the guys, friend, spiritual policeman, parish manager? Or spiritual leader, leader of a team, community symbol, inspired visionary, overseer of the ministries?

- What must happen for me to feel good about myself in the priesthood: Achieving public recognition and honor, amassing material wealth and security, obtaining a particular position in the organization, accumulating a list of accomplishments? Or leading a community where the faith shapes the way people deal with each other, where civic and nonchurch organizations recognize this group as different, where strangers come because they are welcomed and feel included?
- How do I evaluate my ministry as a priest? What counts for success or failure: producing financial surpluses, building state-of-the-art facilities, being liked and lauded, keeping peace without any conflict? Or preaching the whole gospel effectively, living what I claim to believe, contributing to a larger mission and not just to my own personal programs, feeling part of a larger communion of coworkers and peers?

In the episcopal order, these same questions need to be raised as well. As Kenan Osborne has observed in his writings on the various ordained and nonordained ministers in the church, each ministry affects all others. We cannot enhance or renew one station in the communion of disciples without somehow repositioning and thus redescribing the place of all others in this shared life in Christ. Pope John Paul II makes the same observation in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. There must be mutuality in all the types of the church's ministries, or else each is not a ministry of the church communion; it is a private enterprise of an individual church worker.

MOVING FROM THE PAST

However, we bear the baggage of the past, and we must cope with this burden as we move forward under the Spirit. For instance, history created a passive laity who, to a large extent, bore little sense of their mission and responsibility in the church. Vestiges of this passivity remain. In addition, models for appropriately sharing mission and responsibility are often unclear, untried, or lack the skilled personnel to make them operative. In the presbyterate, we are similarly neophytes. We were trained either to go it alone or to submit quietly to authority. The contrast was severe. A priest, as pastor, was an authority unto himself. A priest under a pastor, or *the* pastor of a diocese, was a pawn submissive to the will of the chess master. Neither of these roles prepared us to be members of

the presbyterate, in which the goal is a consensus of leaders behind the chief shepherd. Consensus grows only through mutual respect, honest dialogue, and shared authority. The past sense of autonomy and submissiveness, and the competition and resentment these bred, can never build consensus.

Finally, the priest-bishop relationship also bears the barnacles of former styles and circumstances of the church's missionary voyages. In the United States, these priests often appear as ethnic, poor, uneducated, highly stratified, and adversarial. Bishops often worked to divide and conquer the priests. The relationship held a one-on-one focus that brought to bear many factors extraneous to the mission of the church. Ethnic affiliations, personality compatibility, and shared tastes or interests often connected bishop and priest more than their shared responsibility for the communion of disciples and its mission to build God's kingdom. Bishops need to learn to relate to their priests in the role of their office as head of the presbyterate. They should be encouraging unity among the priests of the local church by inviting them to share in the tasks of governing, sanctifying, and teaching the communion of disciples. A presbyterate grows into a healthy *collegium* by sharing its common discipleship as public witnesses with each other, by working with the bishop to fashion a shared vision that concretizes the gospel in the local church, and by sharing responsibility for the ownership and realization of this vision. Success here is a two-way street. Bishops must focus fearlessly on the mission of Christ and resist the temptation to lead on any other terms. Priests must dedicate themselves to carrying out this mission under the bishop's lead while directly offering him advice and counsel from their vantage point as leaders of parish faith communities.

KEY THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

In summary, priestly identity hinges on some key theological principles that are made operative in a local church:

- All the ordained and laity share the same life and ministry of disciples through initiation into the saving mystery of Christ in Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
- As disciples, we each have a unique and personal relationship with Christ, which calls for respect for each individual, and we all share a communion of

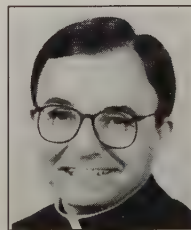
life and ministry, which calls for responsibility and accountability to the church and its mission.

- Ordained disciples are repositioned in the church communion to stand before it as public witnesses of discipleship and of Christ's headship for the sake of the salvation of all. This is the basis of their leadership and authority.
- Such witness is sacramentally designated. It is fully effective when its sacramental character is realized through the full and active participation of all disciples in the saving mystery of communion, through acknowledging and cooperating with the incarnate nature of God's grace, and through the formal relationships ordination creates among and between the church's orders and the whole communion of disciples.

What lies before us challenges every disciple of Christ in our church, lay and ordained, bishops, priests, and deacons. We will only become clear about the particular identities we bear in and for the church when we understand how they relate to each other in an interdependence of life and mission bound by the spirit. We each become more distinct as we all become more one for the sake of Christ's mission of salvation.

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Women Religious as Sojourners

Margaret Mary Knittel, R.S.M.

*I alternate between thinking of the planet as home—
dear and familiar stone hearth and garden—
and as a hard land of exile in which we are all sojourners.*

—Annie Dillard, "Sojourner," in
Teaching a Stone to Talk, 1988

Annie Dillard's alternating thoughts of this planet as home and as exile help identify three groups or generations of women religious in the United States between the mid-nineteenth century and today. These generations of active or apostolic women I call the Exiles, the Arrived, and the Sojourners.

The framework for looking at these three generations will be an open-system and a closed-system view of organizations. We will begin with the Exiles, who exemplify an open-system view. Our concentration will be on the Arrived—sisters actively engaged in the apostolate between 1930 and 1960—and a closed-system view of their workplaces, as well as the impact of the insurgent bureaucracy on their individual lives. Finally, the implications for the Sojourners will point to a conscious return to an open-system view.

THE EXILES

The first generation, the Exiles, traveled from such places as Ireland, Germany, and Italy to establish and work in missions of the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. They lived lives of physical sacrifice and economic deprivation well beyond the virtue or vow of poverty. These women pioneered, piecing together budgets, scraping their ingenuity for survival. These early builders struggled, remaining in this foreign land and reminding themselves to be exiles at heart.

Given the exigencies of their lives, these women operated out of an open-system view of organization. As Margaret Susan Thompson points out in "Women and American Catholicism, 1789–1989," a chapter in *Perspectives on the American Catholic Church, 1789–1989* (eds. Stephen J. Vicchio and Virginia Geiger), their legacy to the American church was one of "flexibility and adaptability to new and changing circumstances." The variables of their coming and their staying were unpredictable.

The impressive track record of six Sisters of Mercy, who would come to and remain in the three-year-old diocese of Chicago, stands as one example of the exile generation. At the invitation of Bishop William Quarter, these sisters, within three weeks of their 1846 arrival, opened a free school and private academy for girls. Within the next seven years they would go on to nurse victims of a cholera epidemic, open a home for children, and open Chicago's first hospital, Mercy Hospital.

These early Sisters of Mercy, like other women religious around them, responded to the diverse and changing needs of their new land. In an open-system view, we assume that there are more variables than can be comprehended at one time. In his book *Organizations in Action*, James D. Thompson writes that “it is our incomplete understanding which forces us to expect surprise or the intrusion of uncertainty.” Variables in a closed-system view are kept to a few; they must be fixed and predictable.

Approached as an open or natural system, the complex organization is a set of interdependent parts that together make up a whole. Each subsystem contributes to and receives from the subsystems making up the whole; the whole, in turn, is interdependent with the larger environment. Bringing forward one open system’s model, we see an organization to be made up of four equal, mutually interdependent subsystems: task, structure, informal group, and individual.

The task of the members of a religious community would be their charism, their mission. The early sisters came with teaching and nursing skills, rooted in a gospel mission to serve the Catholic population. Jo Ann McNamara, author of *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia*, attributes to women religious a mission over and above their particular work: “Through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, they have systematically pursued their ancient mission of enlarging the vocational spaces belonging to women. . . . It is they who laid the foundation upon which the rest of us have built.”

The structure is the second of the four organizational subsystems. Leadership, in the ideal, sustains the vision of the common good, and the structure assumes lines and processes of accountability at once just and active. McNamara notes that for the early sisters, the church structure needed to be circumvented, and many religious orders chose to attach themselves directly to Rome in order to bypass their local episcopal authority. However, in the early twentieth century they would be met by the establishment of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, which had supervisory powers over them. All religious communities were commanded to revise their constitutions to conform to the details of convent life prescribed in the new canon law code of 1917.

The informal group comprises various socially related groups holding similar norms and values. The informal group is neutrally perceived in a well-functioning organization, with attention focused on

The early sisters came with teaching and nursing skills, rooted in a gospel mission to serve the Catholic population

variables not included in a closed-system view. The Exile sisters were informal groups within the whole, serving and gathering with specific ethnic populations. Joan Chittister, author of “An Amazing Journey: A Road of Twists and Turns” in *Religious Life: The Challenge for Tomorrow* (ed. Cassian J. Yuhaus), writes that “so great was the need and so total the response that over six hundred new religious orders formed to meet the needs of one nationality after another.”

The individual, as subsystem, includes the motivations each person brings to the organization. Of that first group of six Sisters of Mercy who arrived in Chicago, four were dead within eight years. Individual motivation, in its depth, variety, and dedication, is a daunting reality.

In this one model of an open-system view of organization, the task, structure, informal groups, and individual subsystems function optimally when each is equal to the other and all relate as mutually interdependent. If one subsystem dominates or withers, the whole organization is affected.

THE ARRIVED

The second of the three generations, the Arrived—working between 1930 and 1960—would bring forward personal and corporate energies to build institutions surpassing the dreams of the earlier immigrant generation, the Exiles. Their institutions and the ones they staffed echoed the economic boom

after the Great Depression. The facilities built up by these women included hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, schools, and colleges. Lauds, awards, and status were afforded to this new generation of women religious, whose members often rose above their families of origin to live in what was becoming an increasingly educated and secure middle-class religious community.

The Arrived were accustomed to, and would further experience, bureaucracies rising up in their lives. Many of these women came from urban centers and families whose members worked in factories for large corporations. Their fathers participated in unions, and family gatherings included a number of relatives working for police and fire departments.

The institutions owned and operated by the religious communities they entered were becoming larger, more formal, and more complex. "For (Max) Weber," writes Warren Bennis in *Beyond Bureaucracy: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organizations*, "bureaucracy was a descriptive term for characterizing what we call 'formal, large-scale organizations.'" These workplaces needed to meet the demands of federal, state, and local governments, all within the context of a bureaucratic church.

Bureaucracy as a means of governing employs closed-system assumptions about an organization, with the variables and relationships needing to be few and predictable. Scientific management, administrative management, and bureaucracy all shared the belief that the ingredients of an organization are chosen for their necessary contribution to a goal and the structures established to attain highest efficiency. These three modes of operating tended to view organizations as if they existed without people.

Max Weber, describing the first of six characteristics of bureaucracy, states: "There is the principle of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is, by laws or administrative regulations." Regular activities are distributed in a fixed way. The authority to give commands is delimited by rules concerning the coercive means at the disposal of officials, and methodical provision is made for the fulfillment of these duties.

The woman religious, with her brothers and sisters in the marketplace, knew the bureaucratic realities of division of labor, hierarchy of control, rules and procedures, advancement based on technical competence, and standard methods of recordkeeping and communication. "Ecclesially established ministries provided the 'world,' the context and framework of meaning, for Religious as individuals and as communities," writes Sandra M. Schneiders in *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New*

Ecclesial and Cultural Context. For the Arrived generation—women religious in the thirty years bounded by the Great Depression and the Second Vatican Council—the bureaucratic mode impacted all aspects of their lives.

Appointments to the work of the year would be read aloud to the sisters gathered in local community, and each individual would listen as the lists were read, waiting for her name. An implicit hierarchy grew up, paralleling the academic model, with the work of sisters who taught grade school perceived as lesser than that of those who taught high school, and both viewed as beneath college teaching. The hospital sisters, compensated as were their coworkers, brought in larger salaries and often existed in a world apart from the teaching sisters. Demands of the workplace gained precedence, and within the religious community, the individual could gain or lose visibility on the basis of her ability to work well within the bureaucracy.

From studies on the impact of opportunity in organizations, we know that the "anointed" in organizations, those high flyers who move quickly through the ranks, are given life through our desire to observe them as winners. We endow their ideas and words with more credibility. We entrust them with more resources and better assignments. We have already decided that they will succeed, and so we continually observe them with the expectation that they will confirm our beliefs. (Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 1994)

The anointed individual, in the language of an open system, distorts the life of the organization, overshadowing structure, informal groups, mission, and other individuals. Other members of a community give over their truth, their experience—and in this relegation of individual dignity, the common good suffocates.

Wheatley contrasts the "anointed" individual to the "dead" individual:

Others in organizations go unobserved, irrevocably invisible, bundles of potential that no one bothers to look at. Or they receive summary glances, are observed to be "dead," and are thereafter locked into jobs that provide them with no opportunity to display their many potentials.

The Arrived sisters experienced the insurgent bureaucracy as separating them from the very "instruments of production" that had been their inheritance and mission, and separating them from one another. The right use of power became displaced by the "ambiguous realm of 'politics'" (to borrow a phrase from *The Post-Bureaucratic Organization*, ed. Charles Heckscher and Anne Donnellon), which takes hold

when informal groups are hidden in the bureaucratic model. Careers, inside and outside of religious life, get carved out of the stuff of bureaucracy as, in Weber's words, "the professional bureaucrat is chained to his activity by his entire material and ideal existence." For the Arrived woman religious, her work life may well have defined the self, and her communal life may well have been lived out maintaining that self as one of the anointed or dead.

THE SOJOURNERS

Since the 1960s we have had a third generation, the Sojourners, seeking a new way to live out their lives as vowed women religious, facing declining human resources and cultural clues from a planet that would have been unknown to the Exiles. That earliest generation had exemplified an open-system view, rolling up their sleeves and engaging with the unpredictable.

The workplace for the second generation of women religious, the Arrived, created an insurgent reality that pressed upon them. Trying to live in a sublimely open system of prayer and deepening relationship with God, they worked in closed-system bureaucracies. The moods and modes of those bureaucracies rose up and spilled over, assigning fixed life roles to individual women religious and appropriating hierarchical rules for their life together.

The bureaucratic residue clings to our sojourned lives. Then as today, we know that some voices in the discourse are heard and counted as bespeaking knowledge, while others are silenced, marginalized, or excluded. We wrestle with interdependence vis-à-vis a merged dependence or an isolated independence, and we attest to mutuality while continuing a staircase existence. The Sojourner's life seems rife with attempts to balance the private/public, individual/communal, and active/contemplative, while all along, filtering through these tensions, enter the unmined assumptions and persistence of bureaucratic constructs and behaviors.

In a 1969 speech, John Tracy Ellis described one of two weaknesses that hindered church leaders from being creative leaders: "the fears and the timidity that are the offspring of a training that in no way fitted them to probe and to scrutinize, motivated by love." Could these be the infinitives of transformation—to probe, to scrutinize—that, once conjugated into an action motivated by love, will help us uncover the residues of bureaucracy?

An open-system view of an organization recognizes the unpredictable, believes that each subsystem affects the whole, and values interdependence and

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mutuality. Joyce Fletcher, in her book *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work*, places our challenge on a larger cultural screen:

Mutual empowerment activities require an ability to operate in an environment of "fluid expertise," where power and expertise shift from one party to another, not only over time but in the course of one interaction.

Throw away title, status, and self-sustained victimhoods; quit blaming the church, the community, oneself; and dispel the fear of change or loss of power, the need to be expert. This is the rubble covering our hearts.

Imagine, then, an environment in which the individual woman religious, within herself and then with others, experiences "fluid expertise." In such an environment, interdependence and mutuality thrive; here we can go about the essential work we came to do; here we can shake loose the bureaucratic residue of a closed system and be free, together, to be the Sojourners we always wanted to be.



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Trusting Fear

Allan Schnarr, M.Div., Ph.D.

Once upon a time there was a little child named Murphy. Poor little Murphy had no one smart and strong and loving to put him to bed at night. So it was that when the first nightmare came, Murphy couldn't wake up and call for help. It never even occurred to the lost little soul. Before long, Murphy couldn't see much difference between waking and sleeping. The nightmare was always just around the corner. Whatever could go wrong soon would. Murphy's belief became so continually reinforced that it was soon considered a law of nature.

There's a little Murphy inside everyone I've known, including myself. Whether in dreams or in waking life, everyone experiences trauma. Physical, sexual, or verbal abuse, emotional neglect, loss of a loved one, loss of a job, serious illness, and injury are only some of the possibilities. Most people have some unresolved trauma lurking in the shadows inside themselves. The intolerable has happened. It has been too overwhelming to face. So it gets fearfully tucked away. And it lurks there, always threatening to pop out and spoil things. Such is the bogeyman's job. If you live with unresolved trauma, you can never delude yourself with security for too long. The unavoidable is inevitable. Little Murphy knows this to be true.

For those with unresolved trauma, fear is a sure

sign of their imminent demise. To feel fear is to be trapped in the nightmare. The monster is coming. There is no escape. Little Murphy's solution to this problem is ingenious: avoid feeling afraid. If you're not afraid, nothing bad can happen. Unfortunately, the talisman to ensure such magic is beyond Murphy's grasp. What has happened now is that fear itself is to be feared. This is a tragic trap. Either there's no fear and all is well, or there is fear and life is hell. The lifegiving value of fear has been lost. The vital siren that sounds its warning has become the spell-binding vampire waiting hungrily in the shadows. Poor little Murphy. Fear has become the only enemy. There are no friends.

Perhaps you're testing a sigh of relief right now. Thank God you're not as devastated as little Murphy. I felt a sigh coming on too. I'm sighing more than once because little Murphy is a part of me but no longer rules the universe. I have worked hard to learn to trust fear again. Trusting fear is not an oxymoron. Fear is vital, a wakeup call to awareness. Something important is happening. Get with it! Murphy has a lot to learn.

The first challenge of fear is to acknowledge it. What am I fearing? What do I think might happen? What images is my mind conjuring? Fear must be

named. Since the beginning of time, this has given humans power over the demon.

The second challenge is to think clearly. Is there reason to fear? Is this fear reasonable or unreasonable? If what I fear might happen does happen, what makes it so terrible? How likely is such an occurrence? Fear is the child of two parents: belief and imagination. Beliefs are logical deductions based on past experience (the way things were once is the way they will be again). Imagination fills in the colors and sounds of the possibilities that fit the beliefs. Both of these parents need to be listened to if the fear is to be realistically evaluated.

The third challenge is to deal with immediate danger. Sometimes little thought is required to know that the fear is reasonable. Now is the time. Do or die. The body surges into fight/flight mode. Tremendous energy is available to end the threat, whether to life itself or to a cherished value. This can mean direct encounter or escape. If one chooses escape, it is important to face how temporary the solution may be. Perhaps it is worthwhile to deal with it now? No one else can make this judgment for me. If flight is the best I can do, there is no shame in it.

The fourth challenge is to deal with eventual danger. This requires careful consideration. I have to get to the root of the fear that I'm projecting into the future. Whatever might happen, I need to take precautions, make plans, so that I know I am ready to handle what comes. This may mean learning new skills. Such efforts need to be balanced with the cost in time and energy spent now preparing for the future. Getting ready for the future can become a way of life in which the present goes un-lived.

The fifth challenge is to resolve unreasonable fear.

This involves learning to relax and confronting the fear, little by little, while relaxed. Psychologists call this systematic desensitization. It can be done with a therapist or on your own. Relaxation training can be accomplished through any form of meditation. Essentially it entails focusing awareness on deepening the breath and releasing muscle tension. This shifts one's physiology from sympathetic arousal (fight or flight) to parasympathetic ease. Breath rate, heart rate, and metabolism slow. Grounded in this physical feeling of safety, unreasonable fears dissipate. Mind and body exchange the message: There is no reason to fear; all is well now. Conscious relaxation is also often necessary after facing the third or fourth challenge above. If I've dealt with the immediate or eventual danger, it is self-defeating to continue feeling afraid.

Fear is not meant to last. The nightmare can come to an end. One can learn to sleep and wake in peace. Little Murphy longs to believe this, to rediscover the love that is strong enough and smart enough to put fear in its place. This comforting love is available to him in the person of every realistically mature adult who knows that fear can be overcome by love. God made it so.



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Psychological Assessments in Lay Formation

*Paul N. Duckro, Ph.D., Lynn J. McLaughlin, Ph.D.,
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Programs of formation for lay ministry students address the spiritual, psychological, and social development of those laity who hope to serve in ecclesial or spiritual ministries. With the advent of new understandings of church and ministry since the Second Vatican Council, there have been many new opportunities for ministry, including liturgical, pastoral care of the sick and aged, catechetical, campus ministry, and coordination of parish life. The number of lay people serving in full- and part-time positions of leadership and service has increased dramatically during the past thirty years. Church leaders have embraced and affirmed these developments.

As the first lay ministers were coming onto the scene over thirty years ago, the emphasis was on academic preparation. A person with a bachelor's or master's degree in theology, religious studies, liturgy, or spirituality was viewed as having the background to serve in ministerial or ecclesial positions. However, as these individuals began ministering, the need for pastoral and interpersonal skills to complement the intellectual insights soon became apparent. The questions prompted by people's lives could not always be met with an explanation of a particular belief or practice. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, lay ministry training began to focus more on skill development for ministry. Practica of various lengths were developed

to help lay ministry students develop skills and provide them with experience in real-life ministry situations. Some institutions began requiring students to undergo Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as a means of integrating academic theology, pastoral skills, and ministry practice.

The need for spiritual, personal, and social formation came into focus during the 1990s. There has been a growing awareness that the lives of ministers must be integrated and that certain qualities and characteristics are expected in those who are serving alongside other professional ministers, whether they be laypersons, religious, or clergy. More than simply possessing knowledge and skills, ministers must be whole persons whose lives reflect what they believe and value.

From these insights sprang organized programs for the formation of lay ministers. With the advent of these programs of formation, faculty and administration have become more aware of the need to assess systematically and comprehensively the readiness of individual lay candidates for ecclesial ministry. The process, in some settings, includes both spiritual and psychological assessment.

We have been privileged to assist, over the past five years, in the development of such a program of assessment and formation at Aquinas Institute of

Theology. This article reflects our experience in employing psychological assessment in the formation process.

Psychological assessment, while only a piece of a holistic process of assessment and formation, is an important piece, and one that has often been done badly, if at all. Psychological assessment consists of a unique combination of behavioral observation, narrative history, and psychological testing. It requires the individual student to open the self to scrutiny in a way that often feels uncomfortable. Unlike students seeking admission to seminary or religious community, lay students may not see the process as relevant to their goals. It may feel unnecessarily invasive, not appropriate in an academic setting.

For these reasons, the psychological assessment represents a particular challenge to all involved in the formation of the lay minister. Significant changes in perspective and in the culture of the academic institution are necessary to make it work. Real sensitivity to the many possible misunderstandings and defensive reactions is required on the part of the formation director, consulting psychologist, faculty, and administrators.

RESISTANCE TO EVALUATION

It is still too often true that candidates for ministry see the process of psychological assessment as a hurdle to be cleared. This perception may not be malicious, but it does reflect a limited understanding of the importance of psychological health for effective ministry. From their perspective, the main questions to be answered by psychological evaluation are "Is she mentally ill?" and "Is he dangerous?" The candidate may betray this perspective with an offhand effort at humor. It is hard to count the number of times we have heard some variant of "This is to see if I am an ax murderer, isn't it?"

This stance vis-à-vis the evaluation process reflects a combination of anxiety and defensiveness on the part of the candidate. The defensiveness may be passive (in the form of guardedness) or active (often in the form of anger, perhaps at the length of the process or at the insensitivity of the questions). On the tests, this stance is often reflected in high scores on validity scales, indicating an effort to "look good," to present the self in the best possible light.

Because lay students usually are not accustomed to opening themselves to faculty in the mode of personal formation, the process of psychological evaluation and formation often feels invasive. The students tend to feel that their interior lives are not the business of the school and that they should be accountable only for intellectual performance.

Schools of theology, on the other hand, are increasingly understanding the obligation to certify more than the intellectual acumen of candidates for lay ministry. Laypersons are not immune to the human issues that have plagued religious and clergy over the past two decades. It is now a commonly accepted part of formation for religious life and ordained ministry to explore the risk factors that may be present for harming others by crossing social or sexual boundaries.

Unfortunately, many lay candidates have not yet considered their own risk of causing, and responsibility to prevent, adverse events in ministerial situations that may be highly charged emotionally. They must be educated to understand that psychological assessment is a way of becoming more aware of one's personal dynamics and learning to tap into the ongoing stream of emotional, cognitive, and physical reactions. Increasing awareness reduces risk in that the minister is more likely to process events consciously than to act them out unconsciously. Lay candidates who accept these premises are more likely to tolerate the anxiety of psychological assessment for the greater good.

For these reasons we have felt it critically important to transform the understanding of the role of psychological assessment in formation of lay ministers so that lay candidates might more freely enter into the process.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE EVALUATION

Changing the perspective of the candidate is an important part of establishing a successful assessment process. This change begins with the development of informational materials to frame the experience for the candidate and the faculty. The assessment is placed in its proper context, as one part of the larger process of formation. It continues with the presentation of this material to the candidate. It is not sufficient to simply distribute written material. We have found that a session in which the director(s) of formation join with the consulting psychologist(s) to meet with the students as a group allows for a dialogue with the students, during which their questions can be elicited and answered. In the course of this dialogue, the team has the opportunity to offer a more nuanced presentation of the rationale for the psychological assessment, lay out its particular process, and clarify its place in the overall formation process.

We have found it useful to remember two dimensions when presenting the psychological evaluation. First, it is most helpful when psychological evaluation is seen not solely as a method of ruling out psychi-

atric disease but also as a process of identifying both the strengths of the candidate and areas in which the candidate needs to develop more fully or to work through certain issues. Second, it is correct to acknowledge forthrightly that psychological evaluation cannot hope to do justice to the dynamic, holistic being that is the candidate. The result of the evaluation is, in a sense, a static frame of a moving picture. It represents the student at one particular moment in time. What will be depends on the student's openness and cooperation with the formation process.

With this introduction, students seem to become more open to entering that process as an opportunity to discover, to explore, and to overcome obstacles to the realization of their potential. The context for frank discussion of material typically reserved for the "internal forum" is set.

We have come to call this approach "developmental assessment" rather than "psychological evaluation" to better reflect the perspective we are trying to engender. "Developmental assessment" implies that the person is presumed to be psychologically healthy until proven otherwise. There is not the initial presumption of a clinical problem, the usual beginning point for a client presenting to a clinic. Psychological tests are selected not only to rule out clinically significant problems but also to bring out personality characteristics, interests, and interpersonal dynamics.

The term "developmental assessment" suggests that human beings are always in a state of growth and change. No one comes to formation already whole. We seek to recognize obstacles to growth while affirming the personal strengths that will help overcome those obstacles. Strengths are brought to full realization by removing obstacles; removing obstacles is best done by using existing strengths. This is the paradox of imperfect but developing human beings.

Often, obstacles have arisen from unavoidably dysfunctional efforts to cope with excessive anxiety in early life. They are often patterns of thinking and acting that serve well enough to make it through difficult times, but become confining and limiting in adult life. For example, many persons suffer from performance anxiety. In deference to the anxiety, they avoid public speaking, perhaps by emphasizing gifts of listening to and supporting others. While the avoidance may be effective in managing anxiety, and while the support of others may be beneficial, it eventually becomes clear that the individual's own capacity for leadership is constrained.

Becoming aware of how old patterns, variously disguised and rationalized, are operating in one's adult life is the first step toward changing them. To do this, one usually needs the assistance of an external perspective. The developmental assessment, as a

caring but honest "mirror," may serve this purpose. The combination of story and test results elicits the depth and breadth necessary to see clearly and to plan for change.

INTEGRATING RESULTS IN FORMATION

Having successfully engaged the candidate in the assessment process, the next steps bear on the equally important matter of integrating the results of the assessment into the formation process. This is done in the form of a human (or psychosocial) development plan or a less formal statement of formation goals. These types of concrete plans, as part of a holistic (intellectual, theological, ecclesial, spiritual, psychological, and social) formation program, are now found quite often in seminary formation.

In this context, writing out formation goals makes plain the idea that psychological and social development are critical parts of formation for ministry, while asserting the equally important idea that they are only two aspects of a larger whole. The psychological and social dimensions must take their place but must not seem to dominate. Nevertheless, the psychological dimension is a key element of the formation process. Psychological formation makes possible the full realization of the spiritual dimension, the safe application of ministerial skills, and the compassionate application of theological truths.

Developing formation goals is a systematic, mutual process in which the candidate and formation director(s) agree on specific experiences to remove the obstacles and build on the strengths that were identified in the developmental assessment. Common areas addressed include awareness and expression of emotions, development of social relationships, appreciation and integration of sexuality, respect for personal and professional boundaries, and resolution of old issues reflecting the family of origin. They may be addressed individually or in groups, alone or with the assistance of professionals.

Finally, some method for reviewing the plan and progress toward the goals identified is essential. Conferences to review progress, scheduled at appropriate intervals, are most useful. The review of goals may be done both in the group setting, to allow for some accountability to the peer group, and in individual sessions with the formation director, to provide opportunities for sharing in greater depth. Without a plan for periodic review, the risk is increased that the assessment process will become simply a memory, with little impact on the life lived. With reviews, individually and in the group, there is both encouragement and challenge to see the implications of the assessment through to some end.

DEALING WITH RESISTANCE

In this section of the article, we consider more fully the nature of the anxiety that we have observed among lay ministerial candidates regarding the psychological assessment and suggest some appropriate responses beyond communicating a more positive vision of the assessment.

Some anxiety is a natural part of any process in which one person makes himself or herself manifest to another. For some individuals, the nature of particular events in their personal history will heighten that natural anxiety. The anxiety is experienced as a sense of threat, and when one feels threatened, there will be resistance. At least some part of the individual will fight to maintain secrets in the name of privacy.

In exhibiting this resistance, very seldom does the person speak directly or simply about the underlying anxiety. The resistance is often couched in "adult" language: there are impressive intellectual arguments, perhaps even strongly asserted and angry complaints. It is easy to get caught up in the intellectual debate, responding to the "adult's" challenge and not hearing the "child's" fear. It is just as easy to yield in the face of an emotional flare-up. Nevertheless, if one can remain composed, remembering the underlying anxiety and responding to it, then working through the resistance becomes an important part of the growth that occurs with the assessment process. Selected aspects of working through the anxiety follow.

PREPARING THE CANDIDATE

It is a wise thing for administrators to think over carefully what the organization seeks in a candidate and to share that information with potential candidates. In that sharing, some measure of self-selection occurs. There is also greater understanding of the rationale for the various elements of the formation process, including psychological assessment and the development plan. As a candidate learns why psychological information is desired by the organization, the sometimes dire fear of the way psychological information will be used is quieted.

DISCUSSING RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Similarly, the need to share the results of the assessment with formators should be openly discussed. The release of information form, necessary for the psychologist before information can be shared, should be considered a "conversation piece" between the candidate and the formation team. Its presentation offers another opportunity to discuss the overall

process and how the information will be used in developing formation goals.

At the same time, it is also an opportunity to discuss the limits of the release of information. Every organization must have a clear statement as to what will be done with the written report, presently and in the future. Elements of this statement should include who will share the information, where written documents will be kept, and when they will be destroyed. Every candidate deserves to know what will be done with private, confidential information that is revealed in the course of the assessment.

FEEDBACK SESSION

The assessment concludes with a feedback session at which the candidate and formation director are present. The feedback session is an opportunity to offer the candidate a coherent picture of himself or herself as derived from life story and the psychological tests. The consulting psychologist is given the opportunity to elaborate on the written report, making clear what might be misunderstood and working through resistances. The formator(s) play an active role in the feedback session, relating what is said to previous experiences in formation and to the spiritual assessment, as appropriate. Sometimes it is not possible to come to agreement in the session, but the candidate and formator may agree to continue the process with further observation and discussion.

GROWTH WHILE SERVING

We offer one further reflection that bears indirectly on the developmental assessment and psychological formation. It is a truism that in any helping profession, the helper stands to gain as much as he or she gives. It is possible to grow a great deal personally through our work and to learn a great deal professionally from the persons we serve. However, to reap this potential reward, the helper must be open to being touched and shaped by the experience of being with other human beings in the sometimes intimate moments of ministry. Without such openness, the minister maintains a protective shell that limits vulnerability but simultaneously prevents growth. In contrast, by being open to the experience of the other, the minister may come to experience consciously his or her own issues.

For the student in formation, a side benefit of the psychological evaluation is that through the sharing of one's self in this intimate and vulnerable way, he or she is helped to remove the psychological armor that both protects and confines. In facing the developmental issues, the student becomes more aware of

and in touch with the growing edges and thus more able to cut through obstacles to growth. In terms of service, there is new freedom to enter the journey of another without making it one's own. In terms of personal health, there is greater facility to be formed in positive ways by that encounter.

LOOKING TOWARD FUTURE

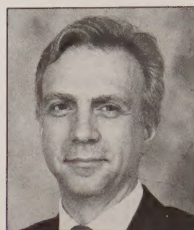
Lay formation is a process like any other program of formation or personal development. In addition, it is a process in the early stages of definition. For these reasons, it is not possible to offer a definitive description of the ideal lay formation program.

However, it is also true that lay formation is both necessary and growing as the number of lay ministers expands and the autonomy of their roles increases. Schools that send forth lay ministers have an obligation to ensure that these ministers have been moved toward psychological, social, and spiritual maturity in addition to certifying that they have met the intellectual requirements of their roles.

In such holistic processes of formation, the psychological assessment plays a key role. Yet by virtue of the private nature of many psychological aspects of the human being, it is also a part of the process that is imbued with difficulties. There are important ethical decisions to be made. There are human resistances to be encountered.

We have tried to describe one dimension of a comprehensive lay formation process that has been developed at Aquinas Institute over the past five years. Our hope in undertaking this article has been to share our experiences and current methods for conducting a psychological assessment in the context of lay formation. We hope also that the article will stimulate fresh thinking and conversation with those

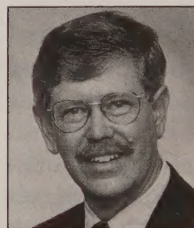
others engaged in or contemplating the process of lay formation. In this way, we all share in the development of healthy and happy ministers and promote a positive future for the church that employs them.



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